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# THE PARASITE,

or

# the art to make one's fortune.

A comedy in five Acts.

Imitated from the French

by

***Schiller.***

And

translated into English for the use of Learners etc.

By

**J. S. S. ROTHWELL.**

**Munich, 1859.**

**John Palm, Bookseller to the Court.**

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# Preface.

As Schiller's Parasite is frequently used in Schools etc., for the purpose of being translated into English, perhaps a faithful translation of it may not be considered superfluous. The master will find in it a means of facilitating his labour, and of pointing out to his pupils the difference of idiom and construction of both languages. In preparing the present translation — the only one, which has hitherto appeared in print — I have held as strictly to Schiller's text, as the correct idiom of the language would allow, thereby rendering it much more useful for learners or others, than a free translation could have done.

I have been so much the more induced to offer this little work to the public, as a German edition of the Parasite has been published with English explanatory notes, which only leads the learner astray — the notes being for the greater part entirely false, both as to idiom and the choice of words, proper to express the idea intended.

Stuttgart, September, 1858.

***J. S. S. Rothwell.***

# CHARACTERS.

**Narbonne**, *Minister.*
**Mrs. Belmonte**, *his mother.*
**Charlot**, *his daughter.*
**Selicour**, **La Roche**, **Firmin**, } *subalterns to the Minister.*
**Charles Firmin**, *lieutenant, son of the latter.*
**Michael**, *valet-de-chambre to the minister.*
**Robineau**, *a young peasant, cousin to Selicour.*

**The Scene is in Paris, in the antechamber of the Minister.**

# ACT I.

## Scene I.

*Enter Firmin the father, and Charles Firmin.*

*Charles.* What a happy chance — only imagine father! —

*Firmin.* What is it?

*Charl.* I have found her again.

*Firm.* Whom?

*Charl.* Charlot. Since I have been in Paris, I have sought her in vain in all public places — and the first time I enter your office, I have the good fortune to meet her.

*Firm.* But how then?

*Charl.* Just imagine! This excellent young lady, whom I visited in Colmar at her aunt's — this Charlot, whom I love, and shall ever love — is the daughter! —

*Firm.* Of whom?

*Charl.* Of your chief, the new minister — I knew her only by the name of Charlot.

*Firm.* She is the daughter?

*Charl.* Of Mr. de Narbonne.

*Firm.* And you love her still?

*Charl.* More than ever, father! She has not recognised me, I think. I was just about to salute her, when you entered. — And it is well that you interrupted me! For what could I have said to her! My confusion must have become perceptible to her, and betrayed my feelings. — I am no longer master of myself. Since the six months which I have been separated from her, she has been my only thought — she is the source, the soul of my poems. — The applause they have gained for me is due to her alone; for my love is the God that inspires me.

*Firm.* A poet and lover persuades himself of many things, when he is twenty years of age. — I also, at your age, lost my verses and my time. — It's a pity that the best half of life passes away with the pleasing illusion. — And if there were but a little rational hope in this love! — But to aspire to a thing which can never be attained! — Charlot de Narbonne is the daughter of a rich man of rank — our whole riches are my place and your lieutenancy.

— *Charl.* But is this not in some degree your own fault, father? Pardon me! With your abilities, what could you not aspire to? If you made use of your talents, you would, perhaps, be minister yourself instead of being his clerk, and

your son might, without timidity, lay claim to Charlot's hand.

*Firm.* Your father is the greatest genius, if you are listened to! Don't mention it, my son, I know better what I am worth. I possess some knowledge, and am of use—but how many men quite other than I am, remain unnoticed, and see themselves supplanted by impudent upstarts. No, my son, let us not make too high pretentions.

*Charl.* But yet, not undervalue ourselves. What! are you not worth infinitely more than that Selicour, your superior in office — that conceited blockhead, who, under the late minister, directed all; who, by all sorts of unworthy actions, insinuated himself into his favor, disposed of charges, surreptitiously obtained pensions, and, who, as I have been told, stands high in favor with the new minister?

*Firm.* What objection have you to this Selicour? Is his business not done as it ought to be?

*Charl.* Yes, because you assist him. — You cannot deny, that you do three fourths of his work.

*Firm.* People must render each other mutual services. If I perform his functions, he also often performs mine.

*Charl.* Quite right, therefore you should be in his place, and he in yours.

*Firm.* I will not drive any one from his place, and I like to be where I am, — in obscurity.

*Charl.* You ought to endeavour to mount as high as you can reach — Your keeping at a distance under the late minister, did honor to your mode of thinking, and I admire you so much the more for it. — You felt too noble, to wish to gain by favor what was due to your merit. But Narbonne, people say, is an excellent man, who searches for merit, — who wishes to do the best he can. Why will you, from excessive modesty, still give up the field to incapacity and intrigue?

*Firm.* Your passion misleads you to exaggerate Selicour's faults and my merit. — Even though Selicour makes too great pretentions for his indifferent talents, yet he is honorable and means well. Whether he does his work himself or has it done by another — if it is but done! — And supposing him to be worth still less, am I, therefore, worth more? Does my merit augment by his want of merit? Up to the present, I have been quite contented in my obscurity, and have not aspired to a higher aim. Should I change my mind in my old age? My situation, you say, is too bad for me! No matter! 'Tis much better than if I were too bad for my situation.

*Charl.* And thus, I shall be obliged to renounce Charlot.

## Scene II.

*The preceding. Enter La Roche.*

*Firm.* Is not that La Roche?

*La Roche (Dejected).* He himself.

*Firm.* So melancholy. What has happened to you?

*La R.* You are going to your office! How happy you are! — I — I will enjoy the fine morning, and take a walk on the ramparts.

*Firm.* La Roche! What's the matter? Are you no longer? —

*La R. (Shrugs his shoulders.)* No longer. — My place has been disposed of. I was dismissed yesterday evening.

*Charl.* Good gracious!

*La R.* My wife knows nothing of it as yet. Don't betray it to her. She is ill; it would be her death.

*Charl.* Never fear. She shall learn nothing of it from us.

*Firm.* But tell me, La Roche, how —

*La R.* Has any one the least thing to reproach me with? I will not praise myself, but I think I can keep a register, and conduct a correspondence as well as another. I have no debts; no objection can be made to my morals. I am always the first in the office, and the last who leaves it, and yet I am dismissed!

*Firm.* Every one who knows you, must give you that testimony.

*Charl.* But who can have done you this bad service?

*La R.* Who? It is one of Selicour's acts of friendship.

*Charl.* Is it possible?

*La R.* I have it from good authority.

*Firm.* But how?

*La R.* Selicour, you know, is from my native place. We are both of the same age. The little he writes, he learnt from me, for my father was Schoolmaster and church-clerk in our village. I have intiated him into business. He now shows me his thanks by dismissing me, in order to replace me by, I know not what cousin of our minister's valet-de-chambre.

*Charl.* A fine plan!

*Firm.* But is there no remedy to be found?

*La R.* I expect it from you, Mr. Firmin! — I was just about to apply to you. — You are honorable. — Listen! It is not my place that I care for, but I'll have revènge. This impudent fellow, so supple, so cringing to his superiors, imagines he may, with impunity, injure a poor devil such as I am. — But take care of yourself, friend Selicour! The despised adversary shall cause you very serious trouble; even should it cost me my place, my means of living for ever — I must have revenge. To serve

my friends, I would go through fire and water, but my enemies shall have cause to remember me.

*Firm.* Not so, dear La Roche — To forgive and forget is the revenge of a good man.

*La R.* No mercy, Sir, for knaves! To unmask rascals is a good, a meritorious deed. — His place, you know full well, belongs to you by the rights of God and man — and that too for more reasons than one. But work, work yourself to death, labour hard — yet you have lost your time and trouble in vain! Who cares for your merit? Who troubles himself about it? Fawn, flatter, bend your neck, cajole, — that recommends a man. That is the way to fortune and honour. Thus Selicour has acted, and you see how well he fares.

*Firm.* But do you not wrong the good man, dear La Roche?

*La R.* Wrong him! Well, well — I will not pretend to any great knowledge of mankind, but I know well what to make of this Selicour, I have penetrated him — I do not know myself as well as I know him. — Already at school it was clearly seen what that fellow would become! How he fawned on the master, and listened and flattered, and knew how to arrogate to himself the merits of others, and to lay his eggs in others' nests. He stopped at no meanness, in order to ingratiate, to nestle himself. When he

grew older, all this was performed on a larger scale. Now he played the hypocrite, now the jester, as time and opportunity served; he knew how to sail with every wind. Don't imagine that I calumniate him. It is well known that strange things happened under the late minister. — Well, he is dead — I won't speak ill of him. — But how well this Selicour knew how to flatter his weaknesses and his vices by the most infamous services of a pander. — And scarcely was the minister fallen, he was the first to abandon, to deny him.

*Charl.* But how can he keep up his credit with the new minister, who is so worthy a man?

*La R.* By playing the hypocrite. That fellow knows how to accommodate himself to his people, and to change his character according to circumstances. — He doesn't even mind doing a good action, provided anything is to be gained by it, just as little as he does in committing a knavery, if it leads to his purpose.

*Charl.* But Mr. de Narbonne has a penetrating mind, and will soon have found out his man.

*La R.* That's just what he fears. — But his head is as void of all useful knowledge, as it is full of intrigues. — Thus for instance, he plays the overcharged, the busy man, and by this means, he knows how to avoid every profound conversation by which his ignorance might come to light. — Besides that, he has no trifling projects

in his head, I know them perfectly well, though he imagines he conceals them profoundly.

*Firm.* How so? What projects?

*La R.* Narbonne, who has now much influence in the government, is looking for a clever man for an important embassy. He has the presentation; whoever he recommends will be the man for it. Besides this, Narbonne has an only daughter of seventeen, beautiful and amiable, and she has an immense fortune. Now, should Selicour, charged with so high a situation, succeed in getting out of the country, and out of sight of the penetrating minister, he may, with the assistance of a clever and discreet secretary, long conceal his consummate ignorance. But even should it one day come to light, of what consequence is that to the son-in-law of the minister? Therefore the minister must first be won, and for this reason, he assumes the air of the experienced diplomatist. — The mother of the minister is a talkative, good old lady, who is proud of her taste for music, and pretends to be a connoisseur. — He has ingratiated himself into the favour of this old lady, has recited to her charades and sonnets, nay, the bungler has, in the evenings, the impudence to thrum to her airs and songs on the guitar. — The young lady has read novels; with her he plays the sentimentalist, the lover, and thus, he is the favorite of the whole house, fondled by the mother, esteemed

by the daughter. The embassy is almost a certainty to him, and he will shortly propose for the hand of the daughter.

*Charl.* What do I hear? He has the impertinence to pay his addresses to Charlot?

*La R.* That he has; you may well believe me.

*Charl.* To Charlot, whom I love! whom I adore!

*La R.* You love her? You?

*Firm.* He is a fool! He has lost his wits! Don't listen to him!

*La R.* What do I hear? Is it possible? No, no, Mr. Firmin! This love is by no means a folly — wait — wait — this may lead us to something. — This love is just what I desired — it suits my plans perfectly.

*Charl.* What is he dreaming of?

*La R.* This Selicour is blown up! Blown up, I say. — Totally ruined. — In his ambition, the father, and in his love, the son, shall vanquish him.

*Firm.* But I beg you —

*La R.* Leave that to me. Leave that to me, I say; and sooner or later you are ambassador, and Charles marries Miss Charlot.

*Charl.* I, marry Charlot!

*Firm.* I, ambassador!

*La R.* Well! well! why not? You have a better right to it, in my opinion, than this Selicour.

*Firm.* Dear La Roche! Before you procure us both such important situations, it appears to me you should endeavour to regain your own.

*Charl.* That is like our friend! Such he is! Always enterprizing, always forging plans. — But this is not sufficient; it requires cleverness and prudence for the execution — and our friend's taking matters so easy has already brought him into serious difficulties.

*La R.* It may be, that I promise perhaps more than I can perform. But every thing I see animates my hopes, and the experiment cannot do any harm. For myself, I wouldn't for the world enter into an intrigue — but to blow up this Selicour, to render a service to my friends — this is laudable, this is delightful, this affords me heavenly pleasure — and as to the success — there is not the least doubt of it.

*Firm.* No doubt of it? Consequently you have already settled your plan?

*La R.* Settled — what? I have not as yet even thought of it; but I shall find it out, I shall find it.

*Firm.* Eh! Eh! I see this dangerous plan is not yet far advanced.

*La R.* Never fear — I shall extricate myself with honor; this Selicour shall not get the better of me, that he shan't, I'll answer for it. — Of what use are indirect ways? I'll go straightforward to work, I'll present myself to the minis-

ter, and there is no difficulty in getting admittance to him; he likes justice, he can bear to hear the truth.

*Firm.* How? What? You would have the boldness? —

*La R.* Eh what! I am not timorous. — I fear nobody. — In a word — I will speak to the minister — I'll open his eyes. He shall see how shamefully he has been deceived — that is the work of half an hour — this Selicour must be dismissed — dismissed with shame and disgrace, and I shall enjoy the most perfect triumph. — Yet, I cannot promise you, that I shall not pity the poor devil, when he is obliged to leave the house with ignominy. —

*Charl.* Whatever you may do, dear La Roche! — In all cases, leave me and my love out of the affair! — I hope for nothing. — I dare not raise my wishes so high. — But for my father, you cannot do too much.

*Firm.* Let me speak for myself, my friend! — You mean well, dear La Roche, but the good will runs away with reflection. What an airy project you have devised! an idle phantom! — And even if the success were as certain, as it is uncertain, yet I would never consent to it. These brilliant situations are not made for me, nor I for them; inclination and fate have assigned me a more modest sphere. Why should I change, when I am satisfied as I am? I hope the state

will not seek me, and I am too proud to beg for a place — but still much more so, to allow another to beg one for me. — Therefore provide for yourself alone. You have friends enough, any one of them will willingly intercede for you.

*La R.* So, neither of you will accept of my services? — No matter! I'll make your fortune, whether you will or not. *(Exit.)*

*Firm.* He is a fool; but a good-natured one, and his misfortune grieves me to the heart.

*Charl.* Pity me also, father. I am more unfortunate than he is. I shall lose my Charlot.

*Firm.* I hear some one coming — It is the minister with his mother. — Let us go. — I wish to avoid even the appearance of having placed myself in his way. *(Exeunt.)*

## Scene III.

*Enter Narbonne and Mrs. Belmont.*

*Mrs. Belmont.* Has Mr. Selicour been with you already?

*Narb.* I have not yet seen him to-day.

*Mrs. Bel.* Well, you must confess, my son, that you possess a real treasure in this young man.

*Narb.* He seems to be very clever in his department. And seeing myself transplanted from my rural abode into this great city, and placed in so difficult a post, in which book-learning is by no means sufficient, I cannot but consider it ex-

tremely fortunate that I have met with such a man as Selicour.

*Mrs. Bel.* Who knows all — who is a stranger to nothing, taste and knowledge — the most intelligent conversation, the most agreeable talents. — Music, painting, poetry, ask what you please, he is well versed in every thing.

*Narb.* Well, and my daughter?

*Mrs. Bel.* It is well, that you remind me of her. She is now seventeen; she has eyes; this Selicour has so many accomplishments. — And he is so polite to ladies. He becomes quite exhilirated in her presence. — Oh, it hasn't escaped my notice. This delicacy, the tender attention he pays her, are but a short step from love.

*Narb.* Well, it would be no bad match for our child! I don't care about the accidental advantages of birth; have I not myself made my own career from the lowest rank upwards? And this Selicour, with his talents, his knowledge, his probity, may mount high. I have already thought of him in respect to an honorable post, for which the government is seeking a clever and worthy man. — Well, I'll examine his abilities — if he prove himself, as I have no doubt he will, worthy of such a situation, and if he knows how to please my daughter, I shall, with pleasure, accept him as my son-in-law.

*Mrs. Bel.* That's my only wish. He is too polite, too complaisant, too charming a man!

## Scene IV.

*The preceding. Enter Charlot.*

*Charlot.* Good morning, dear Papa.

*Narb.* Ah, here you are, my child! — Well, how do you like the great city?

*Charlot.* Ah, I wish myself back in the country again — for here I must often watch for an opportunity to see my father.

*Narb.* Yes; I myself miss my honest country-people. With them I joked and was merry — but, I hope to remain so here too. My position shall not change my temper, one may be a man of business, and yet preserve one's good humour.

*Mrs. Bel.* I am enraptured with this residence. I — I am here as if I were in heaven. I am already acquainted with everybody. — Every one pays me the greatest attention — and Mr. Selicour wishes me to become a member of the Lyceum.

*Charlot.* Imagine, grand-mamma, whom I think I have seen to-day?

*Mrs. Bel.* Whom then?

*Charlot.* The young officer —

*Mrs. Bel.* What officer?

*Charlot.* Young Charles Firmin —

*Mrs. Bel.* Who called on your aunt every evening at Colmar —

*Charlot.* Who always conversed with you. —

*Mrs. Bel.* A polite young man.

*Charlot.* Isn't he, grand-mamma?

*Mrs. Bel.* Who wrote such nice verses too?

*Charlot.* Yes, yes, the same.

*Mrs. Bel.* Well, as he is here, he will no doubt call on us.

*Narb.* Where can this Selicour be? This time, he keeps me waiting.

*Mrs. Bel.* Here he comes.

## Scene V.

*The preceding. Enter Selicour.*

*Selicour (Complimenting every one.)* Quite fascinating, I find you all assembled!

*Narb.* Good morning, dear Selicour.

*Sel. (To Narbonne, handing him some papers.)* Here I bring you the article in question — I considered it good, to add a few explanatory lines.

*Narb.* Excellent!

*Sel. (Handing Mrs. Belmont a ticket.)* For you, Madam, I have engaged a box for the new piece.

*Mrs. Bel.* Extremely kind of you!

*Sel.* For Miss Charlot, I have brought this moral novel.

*Charlot.* Oh then you have read it, Mr. Selicour?

*Sel.* Yes, I have just looked through the first volume.

*Charlot.* Well, and —

*Sel.* You will find in it a touching scene. —

An unhappy father — a degenerate daughter! — Helpless parents, abandoned by ungrateful children! — Horrors which I cannot conceive — of which I cannot form any idea! — For, does the whole gratitude of our lives repay the care they have bestowed on our helpless infancy?

*Mrs. Bel.* This worthy man knows how to give a delicate turn to all he says.

*Sel.* *(To Narbonne.)* A chief-clerk is just now wanted in one of our offices. — The situation is of importance, and there are many who solicit it.

*Narb.* I leave the choice to you. You know how to examine the pretentions of each of them — the number of years spent in service, the zeal, the capacity, and, above all, the probity must be taken into consideration. — But I forget that I have to sign some documents. I must go.

*Sel.* And I'll also go to my office immediately. —

*Narb.* Oh, I beg you, wait here till I return, I wish to speak with you.

*Sel.* But I have so much to do before dinner.

*Narb.* Remain; or return as soon as possible. I have need of your presence. A man of your knowledge, of your probity, is just what I want. Pray, return soon. — I mean well with you. *(Exit.)*

## Scene VI.

*The preceding without Narbonne.*

*Mrs. Bel.* You cannot imagine, Mr. Selicour, what a high opinion my son has of you. — But now, that I think of it, I have much to do. — Our relations, our friends, sup with us this evening. — Shall we have the pleasure of seeing you also, Mr. Selicour?

*Sel.* If press of business possibly allow —

*Mrs. Bel.* Pray, don't fail to come, otherwise our feast would lack its greatest ornament. You are the soul of our society. — And Charlot, I would lay a wager, would take it very ill of you, if you did not come.

*Charlot.* I, grand-mamma? Well then! Your and papa's friends are always heartily welcome to me.

*Mrs. Bel.* Well! well! Now go and dress. It is high time. — You must know, Mr. Selicour, that I preside at her toilet.

*Sel.* Thus the fine arts come to the assistance of beautiful nature — who could resist there?

*Mrs. Bel.* He is charming! A charming young man! He can't open his mouth without saying something intellectual and gallant. *(Exit with Charlot.)*

## Scene VII.

*Selicour. Enter Michael.*

*Michael (Entering).* At last she's gone! — Now I can say what I have to say. — Have I the honor of addressing Mr. Selicour?

*Sel.* *(Rudely and peevishly.)* That's my name.

*Mich.* Permit me, Sir —

*Sel.* Am I to be tormented here also?

*Mich.* Sir! —

*Sel.* Certainly, a begging affair — some request. — I can do nothing for you. —

*Mich.* Permit me, Sir.

*Sel.* Nothing. This is not the place — Call on me some other time in my own apartments! —

*Mich.* I didn't imagine — such a bad reception. —

*Sel.* What do you want?

*Mich.* I am not come to beg for any thing — I come to give Mr. Selicour my most humble thanks.

*Sel.* Thanks? For what?

*Mich.* For your having procured a situation for my nephew.

*Sel.* What? How?

*Mich.* I have been in the house only since yesterday; my master having left me behind him in the country. When I took the liberty of writing to you, I had not the honor of knowing you personally.

*Sel.* What, my friend! You are in the service of the minister?

*Mich.* His valet-de-chambre, at your service.

*Sel.* Heavens! what a mistake! Mr. Michael, valet-de-chambre, own-servant, confidant to the minister. — I beg you a thousand pardons, Mr.

Michael. — I am really ashamed — I am extremely sorry for having given you so bad a reception. Upon my honor, Mr. Michael, I took you for a clerk.

*Mich.* And even if I were one! —

*Sel.* One is beset by so many importunate persons. We cannot always judge of people from external appearances.

*Mich.* But I should think, one might be polite to all.

*Sel.* True! True! It was an unfortunate absence of mind.

*Mich.* A very disagreeable one for me, Mr. Selicour.

*Sel.* I am sorry, very sorry — I shall never pardon myself for it.

*Mich.* 'Tis of no consequence.

*Sel.* Well! well! I have shown you my zeal — the dear, dear nephew is now provided for.

*Mich.* I have just come from him. The young lad doesn't want capacity.

*Sel.* The young man will find his way. You may depend upon me.

*Mich.* Doesn't he write a fine hand?

*Sel.* His writing is by no means bad.

*Mich.* And the orthography —

*Sel.* Yes! That's the point.

*Mich.* Pray, Mr. Selicour, don't mention any thing of the letter I wrote to you to my master. When going to town, he strictly ordered

us to beg for nothing. — The good gentleman is sometimes a little odd.

*Sel.* Is he? So, so! No doubt, you know the minister well?

*Mich.* As he is very familiar with his servants, I know him thoroughly, and, if you wish, I can give you every information concerning him.

*Sel.* I believe you, I believe you. But I am not exactly curious, not in the least. Look you, Mr. Michael, my principle is: Do what's right, and fear nobody.

*Mich.* That's well said.

*Sel.* Well then, further! Continue, Mr. Michael — So, the good gentleman is somewhat odd, you say?

*Mich.* He is odd, but good. His heart is as pure as gold.

*Sel.* He is rich; he is a widower; an agreeable man, and still in his best years — Do but confess. — He doesn't dislike the fair sex, the dear, worthy man.

*Mich.* He has a tender heart.

*Sel.* *(Smiling slily).* Heh! heh! Some little amours, not so?

*Mich.* That may be. But in this respect he —

*Sel.* I understand, I understand, Mr. Michael. You are discreet, and know how to keep a secret. — I ask with the best intention in the world, for I am sure, one can hear nothing of him that is not to his honor.

*Mich.* Yes! Look you! He is looking for lodgings in one of the suburbs.

*Sel.* For lodings, and for whom?

*Mich.* That I shall find out. But, look you, don't speak a word about it —

*Sel.* God forbid!

*Mich.* He was very gallant in his youth. —

*Sel.* And so you believe that he has still his lover —

*Mich.* Not exactly that. But —

*Sel.* Well no matter what it is. As the faithful servant of a worthy master, you must cover his weaknesses with the cloak of christian charity. And why should it not be a secret act of benevolence? Why not so, Mr. Michael? — I detest evil interpretations. — I hate to death the least thing like calumny. — We must always think the best of our benefactors. Well, well! We shall see each other again, Mr. Michael. You have forgiven my cold reception, I hope? Havn't you? — Upon my honor I am still quite ashamed of myself *(Offers him his hand.)*

*Mich.* *(Refuses it.)* Oh not so, not so, Mr. Selicour, I know my place, and know how to behave.

*Sel.* Without ceremony. Reckon me as one of your friends. — I beg it of you as a favor, Mr. Michael.

*Mich.* I shall never persume — I am only a servant.

*Sel.* My friend! My friend! No distinction

between us, I beg it of you seriously, Mr. Michael. —

*(While complimenting each other the curtain falls.)*

# ACT II.

## Scene I.

*Narbonne and Selicour seated.*

*Narb.* Are we alone at last?

*Sel. (Uneasy).* — Yes, Sir!

*Narb.* This conference is of great consequence to me. — I have already a very good opinion of you Mr. Selicour, and I am sure, it will be considerably increased before we separate. To business then, and let us lay aside false ceremony. You are said to be well versed in diplomacy and international law?

*Sel.* I have studied it very much, and perhaps not without profit. But yet, I shouldn't like to pronounce myself very clever in —

*Narb.* Well! well! First let me hear then — What do you consider the most necessary qualities to form a good ambassador?

— *Sel. (Hesitatingly.)* Above all things, he must possess cleverness in business.

*Narb.* Cleverness, yes, but which must be always combined with the strictest probity.

*Sel.* That's my opinion.

*Narb.* Continue.

*Sel.* He must endeavour to make himself agreeable to the foreign court at which he is appointed.

*Narb.* Yes! But without in the least compromising his dignity. He must maintain the honor of the state which he represents, and by his conduct acquire respect for it.

*Sel.* That's just what I was about to say. He must know how to support his dignity, and he must not put up with an insult.

*Narb.* Dignity, yes, but without presumption.

*Sel.* That's my opinion.

*Narb.* He must have a watchful eye over all that —

*Sel.* *(Interrupting him.)* He must have his eyes everywhere, and know how to penetrate the most secret affairs —

*Narb.* Without playing the spy.

*Sel.* That's what I mean. — Without betraying an anxious curiosity.

*Narb.* Without having it. — He must know how to be silent, and to observe a modest reserve —

*Sel.* *(Quickly.)* His countenance must be a sealed letter.

*Narb.* Without playing the secret-monger. —

*Sel.* That's my opinion.

*Narb.* He must be possessed of the spirit of peace, and endeavour that all dangerous disputes —

*Sel.* Be avoided as much as possible.

*Narb.* Quite right. He must have an exact knowledge of the population of the different states —

*Sel.* Of their situation — their products — their import and export — their balance of trade —

*Narb.* Quite right.

*Sel.* *(With volubility.)* Of their forms of government — their confederacies — their resources — their military power.

*Narb.* For instance: Supposing it were Sweden or Russia to which you were sent — you possess no doubt the necessary previous knowledge of these states?

*Sel.* *(Embarrassed.)* I — must confess that — I have occupied myself more with Italy. I know less of the North.

*Narb.* So! Hm!

*Sel.* But I am just now studying it.

*Narb.* Well then, let us speak of Italy.

*Sel.* My attention was naturally first captivated by the land of the Caesars. There lay the cradle of the arts, the birth-place of heroes, the theatre of the most sublime virtues! What touching reminiscences for a susceptible heart!

*Narb.* Well! Well! But to return to our subject. —

*Sel.* Very well, Sir! Ah, the fine arts are so attractive. They open a wide field for the imagination.

*Narb.* Venice is the place which first occurs to me.

*Sel.* Venice! — Quite right! On Venice I have just commenced writing a treatise, in which I discuss every thing at large. I'll run and fetch it. — *(Rising.)*

*Narb.* No! No! Have a little patience.

## Scene II.

*The preceding. Enter Michael.*

*Michael.* There is a person without, who begs a private audience on an urgent affair.

*Sel.* *(Hastily.)* I'll not interrupt you.

*Narb.* No! Remain Selicour! This person will have patience a moment.

*Sel.* But if it is urgent —

*Narb.* The most urgent affair for me now is our conference.

*Sel.* Permit me, Sir, but —

*Mich.* The gentleman says, it will be finished in a few minutes, and requires great haste *(Selicour hurries away.)*

*Narb.* I beg you, come back immediately, when the visitor has left.

*Sel.* I shall be quite at your disposal.

*Narb.* *(To Michael.)* Tell him to come in.

## Scene III.

*Narbonne. Enter La Roche.*

*La Roche. (Bowing repeatedly.)* I presume — I suppose — it is his Excellency, the minister whom I —

*Narb.* I am the minister. Pray approach, Sir.

*La R.* I beg your Excellency's pardon — I — I come — It is — I should — I am really in some embarrassment — the great respect —

*Narb.* Oh, leave the respect aside, and to the point at once! Pray, what's your business?

*La R.* My duty, my conscience, the love of my country! — I come to give you an important hint.

*Narb.* Speak out!

*La R.* You have bestowed your confidence on a man, who has neither capacity nor conscience.

*Narb.* And who is this man?

*La R.* His name is Selicour.

*Narb.* What? Sel —

*La R.* Speak it out. This Selicour is just as ignorant as he is base. Permit me to give you a little description of him.

*Narb.* Patience a moment! *(He rings. Michael appears.)* Call Mr. Selicour *(Exit Michael in haste.)*

*La R.* No, no, your Excellency! — His presence is not at all necessary at this interview.

*Narb.* Not for you, I well believe, but it

is my usual way. I listen to no accusation against any one, who cannot defend himself. — When he is confronted with you, you may begin your description.

*La R.* However, it is very disagreeable to — in a man's face —

*Narb.* It is indeed, if one has no proofs. Is this the case with you?

*La R.* I didn't exactly count upon saying so in his presence. — He is an artful rogue, a cool villain. Well then. — For what I care, even in his face. — Zounds! I'm not afraid of him! Let him come. You shall see, that I am by no means afraid of him.

*Narb.* Well! Well! We shall soon see that. Here he comes.

## Scene IV.

*The preceding. Enter Selicour.*

*Narb.* Do you know this gentleman?

*Sel.* *(Quite perplexed.)* It is Mr. La Roche.

*Narb.* I have sent for you, in order that you may defend yourself against him. He comes to accuse you. Now, speak out.

*La R.* *(After having coughed.)* Well then, I must tell you, that we were school-fellows together, that perhaps he owes me some gratitude. We both commenced our career at the same time

— it is now fifteen years since — and both entered the same office as clerks. Mr. Selicour, however, has made a brilliant career, and I still sit just in the same place from which I started. It may be that he has long since forgotten the poor devil, who was once his early friend. No matter. But, after so long an oblivion, to remember the old friend of his youth, only in order to deprive him of his livelihood, as he has done, is hard, and cannot but provoke my passion. He cannot possibly say any thing that's bad of me, but I can say of him, and boldly maintain it too, that this Selicour, who now, in the presence of your Excellency, acts the man of honor, played the regular villain, when time served. He now assists you in the execution of good measures, but I am quite certain that he fairly assisted your predecessor in his bad actions. Like a roguish valet, this hypocrite knows how to assume the tone of his different masters, at the same time that he assumes their liveries. He is a flatterer, a liar, a boaster, an overbearing fellow. Base, insolent to all who have the misfortune to require his services. When a boy he had something good-natured in him, but now, he is far above this human weakness. — Now he has smuggled himself into a splendid situation, and I am convinced that he is not qualified for it. He endeavours to draw the attention of his chief on himself alone, and men of

capacity, of genius, men such as Mr. Firmin, he doesn't allow to advance.

*Narb.* Firmin! What? — Is Mr. Firmin in one of our offices?

*La R.* A man of excellent capacity, you may depend upon it.

*Narb.* I know something of him. An excellent man of business.

*La R.* And father of a family. His son made the acquaintance of your daughter at Colmar.

*Narb.* Charles Firmin. Yes, yes, quite right.

*La R.* A young man of talent.

*Narb.* Continue.

*La R.* Well, I have done. I have said enough, I think.

*Narb.* *(To Selicour.)* Justify yourself.

*Sel.* I am accused of ingratitude. I! of ingratitude! I should have thought my friend La Roche knew me better. Want of influence, and not of good will on my part, is the cause of his having remained so long in obscurity. — What terrible accusations against a man whom he has found faithful these twenty years. How can he so rashly pronounce his suspicion, construe my actions so abominably, and persecute me with this passion, this bitterness! — As a proof of how much I am his friend! —

*La R.* He, my friend! Does he imagine me to be a blockhead? And what proof has he given me of it!

*Narb.* He didn't interrupt you.

*La R.* So, I shall be condemned.

*Sel.* His place has been given to another, that's true, and no one deserved this injustice less than he. But I should have hoped, my friend La Roche, instead of accusing me as an enemy, would, as a friend, have come to me in my apartments, and demanded an explanation from myself. That, I confess, I had expected, and I even anticipated the agreeable surprise, which I had prepared for him. What a sweet enjoyment for me to render him happy beyond his most sanguine expectations! Just to the office of chief-clerk, of which I spoke to your Excellency to-day, I intended proposing my old friend La Roche.

*La R.* Me to be chief! Many thanks, Mr. Selicour! — I am a clerk, and no man of business. My pen and not my head must recommend me, and I am not one of those who take upon themselves a burden, for which they are not qualified, in order to shift it secretly on the shoulders of another, and who arrogate the merit to themselves.

*Sel.* The place would suit you well, my friend, believe me who know you better than you do yourself. *(To Narbonne.)* He is an excellent man of business, exact, indefatigable, full of good sense, and deserves the preference above all his competitors. — He accuses me of preventing men

of genius of succeeding, and cites Mr. Firmin as an example. The example is not well chosen, excellent as the man is. — In the first place, his present situation is not bad — but, 'tis true, he deserves a better, and it has been already found for him — for Mr. Firmin is just the man whom I intended recommending to your Excellency as my successor, in case I should receive the place, which my kind benefactor may have destined for me. — He asserts that I am not qualified for my present place. — I know well, that I possess no great talent. — But, one should consider, that this accusation is directed more against my patron than myself! — If, in reality, I am not qualified for my place, then the chief who entrusts me with it, and who so often expresses his content with my trifling talent, is to blame. — Finally I am accused of having been the accomplice of the late minister! — I have let him hear the voice of truth, I have spoken the language of an honest man, at a moment in which my accusers perhaps were cringing in the dust before him. — Twenty times did I wish to give that incapable minister notice that I would leave the service, and nothing but the hope of being useful to my country prevented my doing so. What a sweet reward for my heart, if, on the one side, I could have hindered evil, on the other, have done good! — I braved his power, defended the good cause against him, while he

was still in authority. He fell, and I paid the most heart-felt tribute of compassion to his misfortune. If this is a crime, I am proud of it, I boast of it, — It is hard, very hard for me, my dear La Roche, to see you amongst my enemies — to be compelled to defend myself against a man whom I esteem and love! But come! Let us make peace, let me have your friendship again, and let all be forgotten!

*La R.* The villain! — He almost moves myself.

*Narb.* Well, what have you to say to that?

*La R.* I? — Nothing! The confounded rogue disconcerts me completely.

*Narb.* Mr. La Roche! It is right and praiseworthy, fearlessly to attack a villain, no matter in what position he may be, and to persecute him without mercy — but to persist obstinately, in an unjust hatred, shows a corrupt heart.

*Sel.* He doesn't hate me! Not in the least! My friend La Roche has the best heart in the world! I know him — but he is hot-blooded — he lives on the income of his situation — this excuses him! He imagined he had lost his means of living! I have been also in the wrong. — I confess it — Come! come! let me embrace you, let all be forgotten!

*La R.* I embrace him! Never, never! Well, I don't know how he has managed to deceive even myself, — to deceive your Excellency —

but, in short! I persist in my accusation. — No peace between us, till I have unmasked him, till I have shown him in his whole deformity.

*Narb.* I am convinced of his innocence. — Unless facts, sufficient proofs, be produced to convince me of the contrary.

*La R.* Facts! Proofs! A thousand to one!

*Narb.* Out with them then!

*La R.* Proofs enough — a legion — but that's just the thing — I can prove nothing with them! Nothing can be proved against such arrant knaves. — Formerly he was as poor as I am, now he swims in abundance. When I told you that he turned his former influence into money, that his whole wealth originated in it — I cannot prove this, 'tis true, under hand and seal. — But God knows, it is the truth; I'll set my life and death on it!

*Sel.* This accusation is too base to concern me — however, I'll submit to the strictest inquiry. — What I possess is the fruit of fifteen years' application. I have acquired it with the sweat of my brow and the sacrifice of repose, and I imagine, I spend it in no ignoble manner. It supports my poor relations, it prolongs the life of my indigent mother.

*La R.* A lie! A lie! 'Tis true, I can't prove it! But, 'tis a lie, a shameless lie!

*Narb.* Moderate your passion.

*Sel.* Heavens! What must I hear! My friend

La Roche can treat me so ill! — What madness has seized you? I don't know whether to laugh or be angry at this insanity. — But to laugh at the expense of a friend who feels offended — No, that I cannot! That is too serious a matter! — Thus to misjudge (zu verkennen) your old friend! — Recover your senses, dear La Roche, and do not, at least, through ill-applied defiance deprive yourself of so excellent a situation as that which I have destined for you.

*Narb.* To tell the truth, Mr. La Roche, this obstinacy gives me no good opinion of you. — Must I also beg you to be just to your friend? — Upon my honor, I heartily pity poor Mr. Selicour.

*La R.* That I well believe, your Excellency, for, in spite of my just indignation, he has, for a moment, nearly confounded myself — but, no, no! I know him too well — I am too certain of the truth of my cause. — Between us, war, war, and no reconciliation. Here I see that all further talking is in vain. But, although the rascal has reduced me to the greatest extreme, I'll die of hunger a thousand times rather than be indebted to him for the means of subsistence. I have the honor to wish your Excellency good morning. *(Exit.)*

## Scene V.

*Narbonne and Selicour alone.*

*Narb.* Can you conceive this persevering obstinacy? —

*Sel.* It's of no consequence! He is a good-natured fool. I will soon pacify him again.

*Narb.* He is rash and inconsiderate, but, at heart, he may be a good man.

*Sel.* A very good-natured fellow, I'll answer for it — but he is a little eccentric. — It may be also that some one incites him against me.

*Narb.* Do you think so?

*Sel.* There may be some truth in it. — Who knows? Some envious and secret enemy — for this poor devil is but a machine.

*Narb.* But who should —

*Sel.* There are so many who desire my ruin.

*Narb.* Have you any suspicion?

*Sel.* I suppress it; to think such a thing of Mr. Firmin. — Fy! fy! that would be shameful, that is not possible.

*Narb.* I think so too. The man appears to me to be much too honorable and modest for such a thing.

*Sel.* Modest, yes, that he is.

*Narb.* You know him then?

*Sel.* We are friends.

*Narb.* Well, what do you think of him?

*Sel.* Mr. Firmin, I must say, is just such a

man as is desirable for the office; although no great head, yet a clever man of business. — Not that he wants sense and knowledge — By no means! He may know a great deal, but he does not appear as if he did.

*Narb.* You excite my curiosity to know him.

*Sel.* I have long pressed him to present himself — but perhaps he feels as if he were born to play a subordinate part, and live in obscurity. However, I will —

*Narb.* Don't trouble yourself. — To a man of merit, a person of my station may make the first advances without detriment to his rank. — I will call on Mr. Firmin myself. — But let us now resume our former topic, interrupted by that La Roche.

*Sel.* *(Embarassed.)* It is already a little late. —

*Narb.* No matter.

*Sel.* It is also the time for the audience.

*Narb.* *(Looks at his watch.)* Yes, in truth.

*Sel.* We can defer it till to-morrow.

*Narb.* Well, let it be so!

*Sel.* I will therefore —

*Narb.* One word —

*Sel.* What are your commands?

*Narb.* I may, at least, charge you with a business, which requires both capacity and courage.

*Sel.* You have only to command.

*Narb.* My predecessor in office, by his bad administration, suffered a legion of abuses to gain

ground, which, notwithstanding all our endeavours, have not yet been removed. It is therefore necessary to draw up a memorial, in which all these abuses are exposed, and in which, at the same time, the government is told the truth, with respect to persons.

*Sel.* But, permit me, your Excellency — such a memorial might be attended with serious consequences for its author, and even for yourself.

*Narb.* We don't care about that — no danger, no personal regard must be taken into consideration, where duty commands.

*Sel.* That's thinking nobly.

*Narb.* You are just the man for this work — I need not say any thing more to you about it. — You know the evil as well as I do myself, and even better.

*Sel.* And I am, I hope, of the same opinion as you are about it.

*Narb.* No doubt. This business requires despatch, I leave you, lose no time, this is just the favorable moment — I should like, if possible, to forward it to the proper authorities this very day. — Concise and clear. — Much may be said in a few words. Adieu! Go to work immediately.

*(Exit.)*

## Scene VI.

*Selicour. Enter Mrs. Belmont.*

*Mrs. Belmont.* Are you alone, Mr. Selicour? I wished to wait till he had left — he must know nothing of it.

*Sel.* Pray, Madam, what is it?

*Mrs. Bel.* We intend having a little concert this evening, and my Charlot is to take an active part in it.

*Sel.* She sings so beautifully!

*Mrs. Bel.* You write verses, sometimes, don't you?

*Sel.* Who but writes verses once in his life?

*Mrs. Bel.* Well then, write us a song, or something of the kind, for this evening.

*Sel.* You mean a romance?

*Mrs. Bel.* Excellent! we are particularly fond of romances.

*Sel.* If my zeal could compensate for the want of genius —

*Mrs. Bel.* Modesty! well, well! I understand.

*Sel.* 'Tis true, I require such a trifling amusement for my recreation. I have been up the whole night looking through documents and correcting accounts.

*Mrs. Bel.* What an abominable occupation.

*Sel.* So that I feel myself a little fatigued. — Who knows! Perhaps the amaranth of poetry

may refresh me with her sweet fragrance, and thou, also, balm of hearts, sacred friendship!

## Scene VII.

*The preceding. Enter Robineau.*

*Robineau.* *(Behind the Scene.)* Well! well! If he's there, I imagine I may also be allowed —

*Mrs. Bel.* What's the matter there?

*Rob.* *(Entering.)* This pack of servants consider themselves superior to their masters. — I wish to speak to Mr. Selicour.

*Sel.* I am he.

*Rob.* I shall soon see that. — Yes, upon my soul, it is he — yes — he himself — I still see him, tumbling about with the boys in our village. — Now look at me a little — examine me well. I am no doubt a little changed — do you know me?

*Sel.* No.

*Rob.* Eh, eh, I am little Christopher, son of Robineau, the vine-dresser, you know, who married that stout Madelon, your grandfather's aunt, Mr. Selicour.

*Sel.* Ah, indeed!

*Rob.* Well — it's the custom with cousins to embrace each other, I think.

*Sel.* With pleasure — you are welcome, cousin.

*Rob.* A thousand thanks, cousin.

*Sel.* But let us go to my own room — I am not at home here.

*Mrs. Bel.* Pray, don't let me interrupt you, Mr. Selicour. Do as if I were not here.

*Sel.* With your permission, Madam, you are much too kind! We must excuse his plain manners, he is a good, honest peasant, and a cousin, whom I like very much.

*Mrs. Bel.* That's just like you, Mr. Selicour.

*Rob.* I am but just arrived cousin.

*Sel.* Indeed, and whence do you come?

*Rob.* Eh, whence else than from our village? — But this Paris is like twenty villages together. More than two hours already — since I alighted from the stage-coach — I have been strolling about, looking for you and Mr. La Roche, you know, your neighbour and school-fellow. Well, here I find you at last, and now all is right.

*Sel.* You come on business to Paris, Cousin?

*Rob.* On business, to be sure. 'Tis true, I have business.

*Sel.* And what business then?

*Rob.* Well, well, to try and push my fortune here, cousin.

*Sel.* Ha! Ha!

*Rob.* Well, the business is important enough, I should think.

*Sel.* *(To Mrs. Bel.)* You will kindly excuse —

*Mrs. B.* He amuses me.

*Sel.* He is a very amusing fellow.

*Rob.* Peter, the carter, thinks my cousin has bought his whistle cheap in Paris. — When my cousin was still a little fellow, he was an arch rogue, and the common saying was: "He will not be lost, he will find his way in the world." — We had also heard of him, but the news sounded by far too good for us to believe it. But as we could no longer doubt of it, my father said to me: Go, Christopher! seek out your cousin in Paris, you will not repent of the journey — perhaps you may make your fortune by a good match. — I set out immediately, and here I am now. — Don't take it amiss, Madam. The Robineaus are all straightforward, what the heart feels, the tongue must speak — and when I saw my dear cousin here before me, my heart opened with joy.

*Mrs. Bel.* Well, that's quite natural.

*Rob.* Hear me, cousin, I also wish to push my fortune. You know the secret, how one must set about it, pray, impart it to me.

*Sel.* Be always honest, faithful, and modest. That's my whole secret, cousin, I have no other. You are all well at home, I hope?

*Rob.* God be praised, yes. The family is thriving. Bertrand has married his Susan, she expects to be confined soon, and hopes our cousin will stand god-father. All are well off, except your poor mother. She thinks it really hard,

to be obliged to suffer want, while she has a son so immensely rich in town.

*Sel.* *(In a low voice.)* Hold your tongue, you blockhead!

*Mrs. Bel.* What does he say of your mother?

*Sel.* *(Loud.)* Is it possible? Then the thousand crowns, I sent her, have not arrived? — That grieves me to the soul! — How badly arranged these posts are — my poor good mother! How much she must have suffered!

*Mrs. Bel.* Indeed! She must be assisted.

*Sel.* Of course! I'll beg leave of absence of the minister immediately — it is a just demand. I have a right to insist upon it — the duties of nature precede all others — I'll hasten to my native village — in eight days the whole affair will be settled. — She did not wish to settle in Paris, although I begged her so much to do so. My dear old mother is too much attached to her native place.

*Rob.* Well, I cannot comprehend her at all, for she told us, she would very willingly have gone to Paris, but my cousin by no means wished it.

*Sel.* The good woman does'nt always know her own mind! — But to know her in distress — Oh heavens! That moves me with compassion, and cuts me to the very heart.

*Mrs. Bel.* That I well believe, Mr. Selicour. But you will soon have found means. Now, I'll

go and leave you alone with your cousin. — Happy the wife who will once possess you. So dutiful a son will certainly also make a tender husband. *(Exit.)*

## Scene VIII.

*Selicour and Robineau.*

*Rob.* Odds life! cousin, I am quite surprised at you — I should never have expected so cordial a reception from you. "He is excessively proud and haughty," said the people at home, "he will no longer acknowledge you."

*Sel.* *(After having carefully looked whether Mrs. B. was really gone.)* Tell me, you donkey, what came into your head to fall on me here so importunely?

*Rob.* Well, well! as I told you already, I come to make my fortune.

*Sel.* To make your fortune! You blockhead!

*Rob.* Eh, eh, cousin! How you do treat me, — I'll not suffer myself to be treated so.

*Sel.* So, you'll play the offended, will you — it's a pity to waste your anger — to run away from your village to Paris! You idle fellow, you!

*Rob.* But what behaviour all at once, cousin! — At first the friendly reception, and now this angry tone with me. — That's not dealing honestly and plainly; don't take it ill of me, that's acting falsely — and were I to tell others how you treat me — it would do you little honor. Yes, that it would.

*Sel.* *(Alarmed.)* Tell others what?

*Rob.* Yes, yes, cousin.

*Sel.* Take care how you do that, you knave. I'll procure you a place — I'll provide for my mother. Be quiet, I'll get you a place! You may rely upon it.

*Rob.* Well, if you'll do that —

*Sel.* But here we cannot speak about it. Away! To my room.

*Rob.* Yes, listen, cousin. I should like so much quite an easy and comfortable living, if you could only procure me a place in the excise office.

*Sel.* You may rely upon it, I shall procure you the proper place. — Back to the village with the silly clod-hopper, as quickly as possible. *(Exeunt.)*

# ACT III.

## Scene I.

*La Roche and Charles Firmin meeting.*

*La Roche.* I have been long looking for you. — Listen! — Well, I have kept my word — I have described this Selicour to the minister.

*Charles.* Really? And so all is over with him. Quite over?

*La R.* Not exactly that. — Not yet quite, for I must tell you, he has got himself out of

the affair by lying, so that I stood there like a regular dunce. — The hypocrite pretended to be moved, he acted the tender, the generous friend with me, he loaded me with assurances of friendship, and will appoint me chief of the office.

*Charl.* How? What? That is excellent, indeed! I congratulate you on it.

*La R.* I took him to be a fortune-hunter; I imagined that he only cared for place and money; — I had never thought him so false and traitorous. The hypocrite with all his sweet prattle! But he could not make a fool of me, and I refused it plainly.

*Charl.* And so we are still where we were? And my father is no better off than he was before?

*La R.* Very true — but; only let me manage it! Let me manage it!

*Charl.* Nor am I any further advanced either. I stole into the garden to see whether I might happen to meet my lover there. — But in vain! A few poetical stanzas, which I made there in solitude, are the whole fruit I bring back.

*La R.* Excellent! Bravo! Compose verses on your lover. Meanwhile I'll follow up the scent of my game. The rogue is very much mistaken, if he believes, I have given up my plan.

*Charl.* Dear La Roche! That's beneath our dignity. Let the wretch carry on his dirty work, and let us obtain by merit, what he secretly acquires by baseness.

*La R.* Away with this pride! It is a weakness! It is false delicacy (Vorurtheil). What? are we to wait till honesty rules the world? For that, we should have to wait long. Everybody intrigues. Well then, let us try the same in a good cause. This, however, doesn't concern you. — Compose your verses, cultivate your talent, I will make it productive, I — that's my concern.

*Charl.* Yes, but you must not forget prudence. You have got yourself into a bad affair to-day.

*La R.* And it will not be the last time. — But, never mind! I will proceed, I'll not let myself be daunted, I'll press him so long and so often (and that closely), till, at last, I'll give him a blow. I have long been his fool, now I will play him a trick also. If we suffer the knave to go on as he has commenced, I shall soon be considered the rogue, and your father the dunce.

*Charl.* Somebody is coming!

*La R.* It is he himself.

*Charl.* I cannot bear the sight of him. I'll go back to the garden and finish my poem. (*Exit.*)

*La R.* I will also go away. I will go to work immediately. — But, no — it is better to remain. Otherwise the coxcomb might imagine that I feared him.

## Scene II.

*La Roche. Enter Selicour.*

*Sel.* Ah, ah! Do I find Mr. La Roche here?

*La R.* He himself, Mr. Selicour.

*Sel.* Very much ashamed, I see.

*La R.* Not particularly!

*Sel.* Your furious attack on me has availed you nothing. — The friend has shot his arrow in vain.

*La R.* Never mind!

*Sel.* Indeed, friend La Roche, hard as you attacked me — Yet I was sorry for you, with your foolish whims.

*La R.* Mr. Narbonne is not present now — don't constrain yourself.

*Sel.* What do you mean?

*La R.* Be as impertinent as you please.

*Sel.* Excellent!

*La R.* Boast of your triumph. You have got the better of me.

*Sel.* To be sure, one may be proud of having triumphed over so formidable an adversary.

*La R.* If I didn't do it right to-day, in your school, I shall soon learn to do it better.

*Sel.* What, Mr. La Roche? You have not yet ceased to injure me?

*La R.* On account of one unlucky move, one does not give up the game.

*Sel.* So, you are a faithful knight of Mr. Firmin's! — Well, well!

*La R.* He must often help you out of your difficulties, this honest Firmin!

*Sel.* What does he give you for your knightly aid?

*La R.* What do you pay him for the documents he writes for you?

*Sel.* Take care of what you say, friend La Roche! — I could bring you into great difficulties.

*La R.* Don't be angry, friend Selicour. — Anger betrays a bad conscience.

*Sel.* 'Tis true, I ought only to laugh at your folly.

*La R.* You despise an enemy, who appears too weak for you. I will reflect, how I can deserve your esteem! *(Exit La Roche.)*

## Scene III.

*Selicour (alone).*

*Sel.* They wish to make Firmin ambassador. — Softly, friend! — We are not so far yet. — But Firmin has always behaved so well towards me. — It is probably his son, that young fellow, who composes verses, certainly — and it is this La Roche who incites them. — Firmin has merit, I must confess, and if it should ever awake his ambition, I know no one who could be more dangerous to me. — This must be guarded against!

— But in what a dilemma do I find myself! — Just this moment I am in most urgent need of both the Firmins, the father, with his knowledge, and the son with his verses. — Let us reap advantage from them first, and afterwards I'll find means of getting rid of them.

## Scene IV.

*Selicour. Enter Firmin the Father.*

*Sel.* Is it you, Mr. Firmin? I was just going to you.

*Firm.* To me?

*Sel.* To come to an explanation with you —

*Firm.* About what?

*Sel.* About a bagatelle — Dear Firmin; it is a great comfort for me to see you. — They wished to set us at variance.

*Firm.* To set us at variance!

*Sel.* Certainly. But they shall not succeed, I hope. I am your true and sincere friend, and I have proved it to-day, I think, when that madheaded La Roche wished to slander me in the presence of the minister.

*Firm.* What? Is it possible that La Roche —

*Sel.* He has exposed me most abominably.

*Firm.* He has lost his situation. Imagine yourself in his case.

*Sel.* He is an ungrateful fellow, after all I have done for him. — And he said he did it, to render you a service — But he served you badly

by endeavouring to injure me. — What do I desire more than your happiness? — But I know better than this hot-headed fellow, what is of use to you. Therefore, I have already formed a little plan for you. — The noisy bustle of the public offices is odious to you; I know you don't like living in the bustling city. You shall be provided for, Mr. Firmin. You will choose some solitary quiet little spot, enjoy a good salary; I'll send you work, you like to work, you shall have no want of it.

*Firm.* But how —

*Sel.* These, are as yet only ideas, there is time enough till then. — Happy is he who spends his days in a rural retreat! — Ah, Mr. Firmin! I shall never enjoy that! I am doomed to the city, the slave of circumstances, exposed to the arrows of malice. I have also considered it the duty of a kind relation, to send back to the country, with the greatest speed, a cousin, who wished to settle here. — My good cousin! I willingly paid his travelling expenses — for, you will confess yourself, that it is infinitely better to live free in obscurity in the country, than to plague and torment one's self here in the city.

*Firm.* That's my opinion too. But what do you really want with me?

*Sel.* Well, as I told you, I wished above all things to convince myself of the friendship of my dear colleague. — And then — you have so often helped me out of embarrassments; I do not

conceal it, I owe you so much — so much! My situation will be my death. — I am charged with so much business. — In truth, it requires my whole ability to get through it. — Are you satisfied with our new minister?

*Firm.* I admire him.

*Sel.* Yes, he is what I call a clever chief, indeed. And it was certainly high time, that such a man got the place, if all was not to be ruined. — I told him to-day, that all is not yet as it ought to be. If you wish that all shall take its right course, you must present a memorial, in which all that still needs improvement, should be pointed out with the strictest truth. — This idea of mine he has zealously seized, and wishes to have such a memorial immediately. — He charged me with the execution of it. — But the interminable business, which presses on me — in fact, I tremble when I think of any augmentation of it.

*Firm.* And so, in this case you count upon me? Don't you?

*Sel.* Well! I confess it.

*Firm.* This time you could not have applied to a better man.

*Sel.* Oh, that I know! That I know!

*Firm.* For having been so long an eye-witness of the abuses of the former administration — and in order not merely to sigh over them, as an idle spectator, I have confided my complaints and plans of improvement to paper —

and thus the work, demanded of you, has been already completed by me. — When drawing it up, I didn't think of making any positive use of it. — I wrote it down only to ease my heart.

*Sel.* Is it possible? You have —

*Firm.* All is ready, if you wish to make use of it.

*Sel.* If I wish to make use of it? Oh, with pleasure! — This is indeed a most desirable chance.

*Firm.* But the papers are not in the best order.

*Sel.* Oh, I'll undertake that little trouble with pleasure. — The minister shall have the memorial this very evening — I shall name you as the author, you shall have the honor of it.

*Firm.* You know I don't care much about that. Provided I can only do good, no matter under what name.

*Sel.* Worthy, amiable man! No one does your modest merit more justice than I do. You will therefore be so kind — the papers —

*Firm.* I can fetch them immediately, if you can wait so long.

*Sel.* Yes, go, I'll wait here.

*Firm.* Here comes my son. — Mean while, he can keep you company. — But don't tell him anything of it. — Do you hear, I beg you.

*Sel.* Well. Why not then?

*Firm.* For certain reasons.

*Sel.* Well, if you wish. — However it will

give me some trouble to keep your kindness a secret. — *(After Firmin has left.)* Poor fellow! He fears, perhaps, his son would scold him.

## Scene V.

*Selicour. Enter Charles Firmin (reading a paper which he quickly conceals at the sight of Selicour.)*

*Charles.* This Selicour again. (*About to go.*)

*Sel.* Stay, my young friend! Why do you flee society so much?

*Charl.* I beg your pardon, Mr. Selicour. (*To himself.*) How vexatious to run in the way of this prattler!

*Sel.* I have long wished to see you, my dear friend! How are the muses getting on? How do the verses flow? — Good Mr. Firmin has a great objection to them, I know, but he is wrong. — You possess so decided a talent. — If you were but once known to the world — but that will come. — This very morning I have spoken of you. —

*Charl.* Of me?

*Sel.* With the mother of our minister — and from the manner in which I spoke of you, she is already quite taken with you.

*Charl.* So, on what occasion was that?

*Sel.* She plays the connoisseur — I don't know how she has become one. — She is flattered on account of her son. — What? If you were

to pay court to her in a clever, genteel manner — for that purpose I was just about to look for you. — She demanded some couplets from me for this evening. — Well, in my time, I also composed verses as well as other people, but my brain has become rusty with tedious business! What would you think of composing some verses, instead of my doing so? — You would confide them to me — I'll read them to the company — they will be charmed with them — they will wish to know from me, who — I — I'll name you! I'll seize the opportunity to applaud you. — Every one will be full of your praise, and in a short time the new poet, just as celebrated for his wit as for his sword, is ushered into day!

*Charl.* You open a brilliant prospect for me.

*Sel.* It is quite in your power to realize it.

*Charl.* (*Aside.*) He only wishes to persuade me! It's mere falsehood; I know very well that he's false — but how weak I am against praise! He could persuade me in spite of myself. — (*To Selicour.*) Well, they demand for this evening —

*Sel.* A trifle! A mere trifle! A little song, in which, unaffectedly, a delicate line might be turned to the praise of the minister.

*Charl.* To make the panegyrist, is not my affair. The dignity of poetry shall not be thus degraded by me. All praise, how well soever it may be deserved, is flattery when addressed to the great.

*Sel.* The genuine pride of a true votary of the Muses! Therefore nothing of encomium, but something of love — tenderness — sensibility —

*Charl.* (*Looks at his paper.*) Could I have imagined when I wrote them, that I should so soon have an opportunity? —

*Sel.* What? How? Those are not verses?

*Charl.* Oh, pardon me, A very weak attempt —

*Sel.* Oh nonsense! Heavens! Here we have just what we want. Pray, show it me immediately! — You shall soon see the effect. — It is not necessary that it should be exactly a romance — these bagatelles, these nice little things, often produce a greater effect than one imagines — by them the ladies are won, and the ladies can do all. — Give it me! Give it me! — What! You hesitate? Well, just as you like! I intended to be of use to you — to make you known. — You don't wish to be known. — Keep your verses! It's your advantage, not mine, that I had in view.

*Charl.* If only —

*Sel.* If you wish to play the affected —

*Charl.* But, I don't know —

*Sel.* (*Snatches the paper out of his hand.*) You are a child! Give it me! I'll serve you against your will — Your father himself shall soon do justice to your merit. Here he comes. (*Puts the paper into his right-hand pocket.*)

## Scene VI.

*The preceding. Enter Firmin the Father.*

*Firm.* Here, my friend, but keep it a secret.
(*Gives him the paper secretly.*)

*Sel.* I know how to be silent. (*Puts the paper into his left-hand pocket.*)

*Charl.* (*To himself.*) Have I done wrong in giving them to him? But after all what can he do with my verses?

*Sel.* My dear friends! You have afforded me a delightful quarter of an hour. But one forgets one's self in your society. — The minister will be waiting for me. — I tear myself unwillingly from you, for there is always something to be profitted in the society of such worthy men.
(*Exit, grasping his pockets with both hands.*)

## Scene VII.

*Both Firmins.*

*Firm.* This then is the man, whom you call an intriguer, a caballer — and no one takes more interest in me than he does.

*Charles.* You may consider me a dreamer — but the more he flatters you, the less I'll trust him. — This sweet voice that he assumes towards you — either he wants you, or he intends to ruin you.

*Firm.* Fy upon your want of confidence!

No, my son! And even should I become the sacrifice of malice — yet, I will delay as long as possible believing in the baseness of others.

## Scene VIII.

*The preceding. Enter La Roche.*

*La R.* Are you here, Mr. Firmin! — I am extremely happy — The minister intends to pay you a visit.

*Charl.* To visit my father?

*Firm.* Me?

*La R.* Yes, you yourself! — I remarked well, that as I dropped a word concerning you, you had already excited his whole attention. — This Selicour is rather uneasy about it. — So that the step I have taken to-day has been of some avail.

*Charl.* So, you now see yourself brought to light against your will! — What a happy event!

*Firm.* Yes! Yes! In your imagination you see me already ambassador and minister. — Mr. de Narbonne has some little commission for me, and that will be all.

*La R.* No, no, I tell you — he wishes to become acquainted with you. — And that's not all. No! No! His eyes have been opened at last. This Selicour, I know, is near his fall. — This very day — it is shameful — abominable — but I'll say nothing. — The minister sent to your

house to inquire for you; he was told you were in the office. — He will certainly search for you here. Did I not say so? See! here he is already.
(*Retires to the back-ground.*)

## Scene IX.

*The preceding. Enter Narbonne.*

*Narb.* I have seen documents of yours, Mr. Firmin, which give me a high opinion of your talents, and I hear your probity and modesty praised on all sides. — I am in the most urgent want of men like you — Therefore, I come to beg your assistance, your advice, your cooperation in the difficult office with which I am intrusted. — Will you honor me with your friendship, Mr. Firmin?

*Firm.* So much confidence makes me quite ashamed, and proud at the same time. — I accept your kind offer with much pleasure and gratitude — but I fear they have given you too high an opinion of me.

*Charl.* You have been told no more than the truth, Mr. de Narbonne! — I beg you not to believe my father on this point.

*Firm.* Don't boast too much of quite a common merit, my son.

*Narb.* So, this is your son, Mr. Firmin?

*Firm.* Yes, your Excellency.

*Narb.* The same Charles Firmin of whom my mother and daughter spoke this very morning?

*Charl.* Your mother and the amiable Miss Charlot still remember Charles Firmin?

*Narb.* They have told me much that is very flattering of you.

*Charl.* Ah, if I could but merit so much kindness!

*Narb.* I shall be happy to be more intimately acquainted with yourself and your father, worthy young man. — Mr. Firmin! if it is my duty to seek for you, it is no less yours, to let yourself be found. Let the incapable indulge themselves in ignoble idleness. — The man of talent, who loves his country, tries to catch the eye of his chief, and seeks to obtain the situation, which he is conscious of deserving. — Blockheads and worthless characters are always at hand to boast of their presumptuous merits. — How can true merit be discovered, if it will not compete even with its contemptible rivals? — Consider, Mr. Firmin, that we are responsible for the good which we neglect to do, as well as for the evil which we do not prevent.

*Charl.* Do you hear now, father?

*Firm.* If you'll afford me an opportunity to serve my country, I will embrace it with pleasure.

*Narb.* And I demand no more. — In order to become better acquainted with one another, I beg you both to sup with me this evening. You'll find agreeable society. — A couple of good friends, a few relations. — All ceremony aside, and I pro-

mise you, my mother, who has not become prouder by my new position, will receive you most cordially.

*Firm.* We accept of your kind invitation with pleasure.

*Charl.* (*To himself*) I shall see Charlot!

*La R.* (*Aside.*) Things have taken a good turn — the moment is favorable — Courage! One attack more on this Selicour! (*Advances*) So, at last, you do justice to merit, well! Now, it is still left to unmask vice. — Fortunately, I find you here, and can continue where I stopped this morning. — This Selicour silenced me to-day — I confess, I acted awkwardly, by being overhasty, but the truth is still truth. I am positively in the right. You demand facts — I am provided with them.

*Narb.* What? How?

*La R.* This fellow, who pretends to be the support of his mother and his whole family, has given a fine reception to a poor devil of a cousin, who, in his simplicity and folly, confiding in him, came to town to-day to try, through him, to procure himself a little place. The hypocrite has turned him off as a good-for-nothing fellow. 'Tis thus he treats his relations — and how bad his heart is, his needy mother can —

*Firm.* You wrong him much, dear La Roche! Just this cousin, whom he is said to have turned away, returns to his village, loaded by him with acts of kindness, and cured of false hopes!

*Narb.* Just towards this cousin he has acted very well.

*La R.* How? What?

*Narb.* My mother was present at the conversation.

*Firm.* Dear La Roche! Don't give way so much to the suggestions of blind revenge.

*La R.* Very fine, Mr. Firmin! You still speak in his favor.

*Firm.* He is absent, it is my duty to defend him.

*Narb.* This feeling does you honor, Mr. Firmin; and Mr. Selicour has spoken of you to-day in the same manner. — How rejoiced I am to see myself surrounded by such worthy persons. — (*To La Roche.*) But you who persecute poor Selicour so irreconcilably, you appear to me not to be the good man, you are taken for. — And truly, all I have seen of you till now, does you no great honor.

*La R.* (*To himself.*) I could burst with rage — But patience a little.

*Narb.* The more ill I am told of good Selicour, the better I am inclined to think of him, and I am even about to unite him more closely with my family.

*Charl.* (*Perplexed.*) How so?

*Narb.* My mother has certain plans, which I perfectly approve of. — Also with you, Mr. Firmin, I intend something good. — This evening

we'll speak more about it. — Don't forget to come early. (*To Charles.*) You, my young friend, apply yourself to poetry, I hear; my mother has praised your talent to me to-day. — Let us soon hear something of your own composition. I also am fond of the Muses, although I cannot devote my time to their service — Good bye, gentlemen. — Pray, no ceremony. (*Exit.*)

## Scene X.

*The preceding without Narbonne.*

*Charles.* I shall see her! I shall speak with her! — But these certain plans of the grandmother — O heavens! I tremble. — There is no longer the least doubt that she's destined for this Selicour.

*Firm.* Well, my son! to-day is indeed a happy day.

*La R.* For you, Mr. Firmin — but for me? —

*Firm.* Never fear. I hope to make all good again. (*To Charles.*) Behave prudently, my son! At least don't forget yourself in the presence of the minister.

*Charl.* Never fear! But you also, father, for once in your life, show that you are something.

*Firm.* Well! I shall be lectured too.

*Charl.* Am I not right, Mr. La Roche?

*Firm.* Let his example at least be a warning to you. — Courage, La Roche! If my intercession be of any weight, your cause is not yet lost. (*Exit Firmin.*)

## Scene XI.

*Charles Firmin and La Roche.*

*La R.* Well, what do you say to that? Is it right that your father himself should contradict all I said, and protect the villain?

*Charl.* Dearest friend! This morning I despised your services, now I implore your assistance. There's no longer any doubt that Selicour is destined for her husband. I am not worthy to possess her, but still much less this wretch.

*La R.* Does it require a spur to incite me? You have witnessed how ill I have been treated on his account. Listen to me! I have heard that the minister has, this very day, charged him with the execution of a very important and difficult business, which must be completed before evening. He will either not execute it at all, or at best, he will produce something miserable. Thus his incapacity will come to light. In spite of his flattering manners, he is hated by all, and all wish his disgrace. No one will help him, I am sure of it, so much is he hated.

*Charl.* I shall, in all cases, prevent my father from doing so. I now well see for what purpose he talked me out of my poem. Could he be impudent enough, to acknowledge himself its author in my presence?

*La R.* Come into the garden with me. He must not find us together. — You call yourself

my master, friend Selicour! Take care of yourself. — Your pupil is improving, and even before evening you shall learn something from him. (*Exeunt.*)

# ACT IV.

## Scene I.

*Enter Mrs. Belmont and Charlot.*

*Mrs. Bel.* Stay, Charlot. I have a word to say to you before the company arrives. — Tell me, my child, what do you think of Mr. Selicour?

*Charl.* I, Grandmamma?

*Mrs. Bel.* Yes, you.

*Charl.* Well, he appears to me to be a very agreeable, deserving, worthy man.

*Mr. Bel.* I am happy to hear you say so. I'm glad, dear child, that you have so good an opinion of him, for, if your father and I have any influence on you, Mr. Selicour shall soon be your husband.

*Charl.* *(Perplexed.)* My husband! —

*Mrs. Bel.* Are you surprised at that?

*Charl.* Mr. Selicour!?

*Mrs. Bel.* We don't think we can better provide for your happiness —

*Charl.* I will willingly accept a husband from your and my father's hands — but — you will

consider me whimsical, dear Grandmamma — I don't know how it is — this Selicour, whom I otherwise highly esteem — whom I have nothing to object to — I don't know whence it comes — when I think of him as a husband: I feel in my very soul a sort of —

*Mrs. Bel.* Not of aversion I hope?

*Charl.* Even of horror, I would say. I know I do him wrong, but I can by no means overcome it. — I feel, for him, much more of fear than of love.

*Mrs. Bel.* Well, well! I know this fear, daughter.

*Charl.* No! Hear! —

*Mrs. Bel.* A pleasing, maiden-like bashfulness. That I must know, believe me. — Was I not once young myself? — Besides, this match suits your family. — A man who knows every thing — a man of taste — a nice connoisseur — and an obliging, tried friend. — Moreover, all families wish to have him. Were it not that he is just now afflicted on account of his mother, he would have promised me a romance for you this evening — for he is accomplished in every thing, and he would like to please you in every trifle. — But I hear him coming. He is always faithful to his promise. Indeed there is nobody like him.

## Scene II.

*The preceding. Enter Selicour.*

*Sel.* This morning you requested a pathetic, tender song of me. I have done my utmost, Madam — and here I have the honour of presenting it to you.

*Mrs. Bel.* What, Mr. Selicour? You have finished it already? — Indeed, I was afraid, that the bad news —

*Sel.* What news?

*Mrs. Bel.* From your mother —

*Sel.* From my mother! — Yes — I — I have just now received a letter from her — a letter in which she writes me, that she has at last —

*Mrs. Bel.* That she has received the thousand crowns? — Well, I am glad of it.

*Sel.* Could I otherwise have been so calm? But, heaven be praised, now this stone is removed from my heart, and, in the first impulse of my joy, I composed these strophes, which I have had the honor to present to you.

*Mrs. Bel.* *(To Charlot.)* You would have pitied him, had you seen him. — There it was that I became acquainted with his excellent heart. — Mr. Selicour, I am delighted with your romance, even before I have read it.

## Scene III.

*The preceding. Enter Narbonne.*

*Narb.* Selicour here with you! Eh, eh, dear mother, you detain him from more important affairs. — He has urgent business, and yet you torment him with useless commissions.

*Mrs. Bel.* Well, well, my son! — Why, he's about to become angry.

*Narb.* How is the memorial, which is so important and urgent to be executed?

*Sel.* The memorial is ready. Here it is.

*Narb.* What, finished already.

*Sel.* And I beg you to believe me, when I say, that I have spared neither time nor trouble with it.

*Narb.* But how is that possible?

*Sel.* The abuses of the late administration have but too often grieved my heart. — I couldn't content myself with idly regretting them. — I entrusted my indignation, my blame, my schemes for improvement to paper, and thus it happens, that the business you charged me with, was secretly executed by me long ago. — Nor, indeed, should I have been wanting in courage to publish it openly, if the government itself had not at last conceived the matter, and, in your person, chosen a man, capable of putting all in order again. — Now the proper time has arrived to make public use of these papers. Nothing more

was necessary than to put the leaves in order, and that was done in a few minutes.

*Mrs. Bel.* Well, my son. You may be satisfied, I think. — Mr. Selicour had accomplished your wishes before he knew them; he has anticipated you; and by the most fortunate chance you serve each other mutually.

*Narb.* I see with pleasure, that we agree in our opinions. — Give it me, Mr. Selicour. This very evening, I'll send it to the proper authorities.

*Sel. (To himself.)* All goes well. — Now to get rid of this Firmin, who stands in my way. *(Loud)* Will you pardon me, Mr. de Narbonne? I am sorry to say — but I fear, that the accusation of Mr. La Roche this morning may have made some impression on you.

*Narb.* Not the least.

*Sel.* I feared it — From all I see, this La Roche has already disposed of my charge.

*Narb.* What?

*Sel.* I have always had a very good opinion of Mr. Firmin; but I confess — I begin at last to doubt him.

*Narb.* What? Why? This very day you have praised his good nature to me.

*Sel.* Can one confide in the most good natured man beyond a certain degree? — I see myself surrounded by enemies. They lay snares for me.

*Narb.* You wrong Mr. Firmin, I know him better, and I'll answer for him.

*Sel.* I wish I could think so well of him.

*Narb.* The abominable ingratitude of that La Roche must naturally make you suspicious. But if you entertain the least shade of doubt respecting Mr. Firmin, you will presently have an opportunity of being undeceived.

*Sel.* And how?

*Narb.* In a moment he will be here himself.

*Sel.* Mr. Firmin — here?

*Narb.* Here! — I could not refuse myself the pleasure of seeing him, and I have seen him.

*Sel.* Seen him! Excellent!

*Narb.* He and his son sup with us this evening.

*Sel.* Sup — His son! Excellent!

*Mrs. Bel. and Charl.* Charles Firmin?

*Narb.* The young officer, whose merits you have so often praised to me. — I have invited father and son to supper.

*Mrs. Bel.* I'll give them a cordial reception.

*Narb.* *(To Sel.)* You have no objection to it, I hope?

*Sel.* I beg your pardon, Sir — quite the contrary.

*Mrs. Bel.* I have a predilection for the father for the son's sake. And what does our Charlot say to it?

*Charl.* I, Grandmamma, I am quite of your opinion.

*Narb.* You can then speak your minds freely and openly to each other.

*Sel.* Oh, there's no need of that — not the least. — If I may confess it, I have always considered Mr. Firmin as the most honorable of men — and if I wronged him for a moment, with pleasure I now confess my error. — For my part, I am convinced that he's my friend.

*Narb.* He has proved it. He speaks of you with the greatest esteem. — 'Tis true, I know him only since this morning, but he certainly deserves —

*Sel.* *(Interrupting.)* All the praise, which, you know, I have lately bestowed on him — But such I am. My heart knows nothing of envy.

*Narb.* He combines sound judgment with an excellent heart, and no man can be freer from the desire of vanity than he is. I would lay a wager, that he is capable of leaving to another the whole merit of what he has himself performed.

*Sel.* Do you think so?

*Narb.* He is just the man to do so.

*Mrs. Bel.* His son would not be likely to think so, on this point.

*Charl.* To be sure not, he is a fiery young poet, who doesn't understand joking.

*Sel.* Would he be likely to cede to another the merit of his own work?

*Charl.* Oh, I doubt it very much.

*Narb.* I like this spirit in a young soldier.

*Sel.* Oh, certainly, that promises much.

*Narb.* Each in his proper place, both will be extremely useful.

*Sel.* It is, indeed, delightful, how you seek for clever men.

*Narb.* That's my duty *(Speaks to his daughter.)*

*Sel.* Now, I have it! *(To Mrs. Belmont, aside.)* A word, Madam. — People might think that you detain me from my official duties. Therefore, if my lines should be sung this evening, pray — don't mention my name.

*Mrs. Bel.* If you don't wish it, I will not.

*Sel.* Yes — an idea strikes me — What? If I, for greater security's sake, should request some one of the company to confess himself the author?

*Mrs. Bel.* What? You are capable of ceding the praise of it to another?

*Sel.* Pah! That's a trifle for me.

*Enter both Firmins.*

*Charlot.* *(Sees them with joy.)* Here they come.

## Scene IV.

*The preceding. Both Firmins.*

*Narb.* *(Receiving them.)* I have long expected you gentlemen. — Walk in! Approach. You are heartily welcome. This, Mr. Firmin, is my mother, and this my daughter. — You are no strangers to my family.

*Mrs. Bel.* (*To Charles Firmin.*) I did not expect to see you here in Paris; it is very agreeable to meet dear friends so unexpectedly.

*Charles.* That title is highly valuable to me. (*To Charlot.*) You have left your aunt in good health, I hope?

*Charlot.* Yes, Mr. Firmin.

*Charles.* Those were never-to-be-forgotten days, which I spent in your house. It was there Madam —

*Narb.* (*To Firmin the father.*) Let us leave the young people to renew their acquaintance. — Well, Mr. Firmin, here is Mr. Selicour.

*Sel.* (*To Firmin.*) Indeed — I am — I cannot express to you, how rejoiced I am — to see you introduced at Mr. de Narbonne's.

*Narb.* You are both just the men to do each other justice. (*To Firmin.*) He has something on his heart, I wish, gentlemen, you would give each other a mutual explanation.

*Sel.* Oh, not so! Not so! Mr. Firmin knows me as his friend.

*Narb.* And you may be assured he is yours also; I wish you had heard with what zeal he took your part this very day. That La Roche has certainly again —

*Sel.* But what in the world can it be that leads La Rache to excite people so much against me?

*Narb.* This La Roche is not the man for me — at least, I have a bad opinion of his character.

*Firm.* You may wrong him. I have spoken against him to day, but now, I must defend him.

*Sel.* It is by no means necessary. I esteem him, I know his good heart, but I know his whims too. And let him slander me as much as he pleases before the whole world, if he is only not believed by you. — You see, we have arranged now. — Our difference is settled; further explanation is unnecessary.

*Mrs. Bel.* Well, won't you be seated, gentlemen?

*Sel.* (*To Charles Firmin.*) The poem is already delivered.

*Charles.* Really?

*Sel.* The old Grandmamma has it, and I havn't concealed the name of the author from her. (*Leading Mrs. Bel. aside.*) Do you know what I have done?

*Mrs. Bel.* What?

*Sel.* Young Firmin, you know, writes verses.

*Mrs. Bel.* Yes! — And well?

*Sel.* I have requested him to acknowledge himself as the author of the little song. — He has consented to do so.

*Mrs. Bel.* Has consented? That I well believe.

*Sel.* Mind that you don't betray me.

*Narb.* But, dear mother, till our other guests arrive, let us think of some little amusement. — I'll not invite you to cards. — We can employ our time better.

*Firm.* You have only to command.

*Charles.* It depends on Mrs. Belmont.

*Charlot.* Are you fond of music still, Mr. Firmin?

*Narb.* 'Tis true, you don't sing badly. — Let us hear! — have you nothing new to give us?

*Charles.* If it shouldn't cause Miss Charlot too much trouble. —

*Charlot.* I have just been presented with some strophes.

*Narb.* Well! with your permission, I shall meanwhile peruse the memorial of our friend.

*Sel.* But we shall disturb you, Mr. de Narbonne.

*Narb.* Not in the least! I am accustomed to study amid the greatest noise — and in this case it is only reading. *(Goes over to the opposite side and sits down.)*

*Sel.* But if you'd rather —

*Narb.* Pardon me. It doesn't admit of delay. Duty must be first attended to.

*Mrs. Bel.* Well, we'll let him have his own way, and begin our song. *(All sit down Charlot at one end, Mrs. Belmont beside Charlot, Selicour between Mrs. Belmont and Charles, beside the latter Firmin the father.)*

*Charlot.* The air is equally well chosen, I see.

*Mrs. Bel.* The author is not far off — I can see him without spectacles.

*Sel.* *(Low to Mrs. Bel.)* Don't betray me — *(To Charles Firmin.)* That refers to you, my friend.

*Charlot.* To him! To what?

*Firm.* Is it true Charles? Are you —

*Sel.* He is the author.

*Charlot.* *(To her Grandmamma.)* What? Mr. Firmin is the author!

*Mrs. Bel.* *(Aloud.)* Yes! *(Secretly.)* Pray don't name the real author —

*Charlot.* Why not?

*Mrs. Bel.* There is a reason for it. *(To Selicour.)* Will you accompany Charlot?

*Sel.* With pleasure.

*Firm.* *(Angrily to his son.)* Certainly, an over-hasty matter again — but you cannot live without writing poetry —

*Charles.* But, dear father, first hear, before you condemn.

*Charlot.* *(sings.)*

A youth sat near a fountain,
Binding flowers for a wreath,
He saw them swiftly floating
On the dancing waves beneath; —
"Thus flee my youthful summers
"Like the water's restless way;
"My early days all vanish,
"As the garlands fade away."

*Mrs. Bel.* *(Regarding Selicour.)* This commencement promises much.

*Sel.* *(Pointing to Charles Firmin.)* These compliments are due to that gentleman.

*Mrs. Bel.* Well! well! I understand.

*Firm.* This idea is trivial, is commonplace.
*Charles.* But, nevertheless it is true.
*Narb.* (*On the opposite side occupied with the memorial.*) The introduction is very good, and instantly excites the attention.

*Charlot* (*sings again.*)

"Ask not my cause of mourning
"In the blooming days of youth;
"In spring is all rejoicing,
"All full of hope and truth; —
"But nature's thousand voices
"Sweet murm'ring every part,
"Awake but thoughts of sadness
"In the depths of my poor heart."

*Mrs. Bel.* Delightful!
*Firm.* Not bad.
*Sel.* (*To Charles Firmin.*) You see how all admire you.
*Narb.* (*Reading.*) Excellently developped, and energetically written. — Do, read it with me, Mr. Firmin. (*Firmin approaches the minister, and reads over his left shoulder.*)
*Mrs. Bel.* Quite divine!
*Sel.* (*Approaching Narbonne.*) — But, 'tis true, 'tis very true, I am much indebted to Mr. Firmin for his assistance. (*Returns to the other side, between Charles Firmin and Mrs. Belmont; but without losing sight of the other group.*)

*Charlot* (*sings again*).

"What can that joy avail me,
"Which spring presents so fair?

"On earth I seek one being,
"She is near, yet endless far.
"I spread my longing arms
"To clasp that phantom dear,
"But ah! I can't attain it,
"And my heart is ever drear."

"Descend thou lovely fair one,
"And leave thy castle gay!
"Spring flowers, the freshest, fairest,
"I'll strew along thy way.
"Hark! the grove resounds with music,
"And the brooklet murmurs clear,
"The smallest hut is large enough
"For those who love so dear."

*Mrs. Bel.* How touching the conclusion is! — The dear child is quite moved by it.

*Charlot.* Yes, whoever may have composed it, it has flowed from a heart that knows love.

*Sel.* (*Bows to Charlot.*) That's flattering praise.

*Charles.* What? He thanks her —

*Sel.* (*Turning quickly to Charles Firmin.*) Is it not, dear friend?

*Mrs. Bel.* I am quite enchanted with it —

*Sel.* (*Bows to Mrs. Belmont.*) You are by far too kind, Madam.

*Charles.* How am I to understand this?

*Sel.* (*Quickly to Charles Firmin again.*) Well! Did I not tell you so? You have gained the most perfect victory.

*Charles.* Does he take me for a fool?

*Narb.* The work is excellent! Quite excellent!

*Sel.* (*To Firmin.*) You see, I have adhered quite to your ideas.

*Firmin.* (*Smiles.*) I must confess, it seems so.

*Charlot.* I don't know to which of the two gentlemen —

*Sel.* (*To Charlot, pointing to Charles Firmin.*) A sweet triumph for the author.

*Narb.* (*Folding the memorial.*) A real masterpiece, indeed!

*Sel.* (*Bows to Narbonne.*) By far too much honor.

*Mrs. Bel.* (*Repeats the last strophe.*)

"Hark! the grove resounds with music
"And the brooklet murmurs clear,
"The smallest hut is large enough
"For those who love so dear."

Beautiful! Celestial! Resist who can. — Selicour, 'tis decided! You shall marry my Charlot.

*Charles.* Oh heavens!

*Charlot.* What do I hear!

*Narb.* (*Rises.*) I know few works which are so excellent. — Selicour you are ambassador.

*Charles.* Oh heavens!

*Narb.* That you are! I'll answer for your appointment. He who is capable of writing this, must be a man of honor, a man of genius.

*Sel.* But, permit me — I don't know whether I dare accept it — Satisfied as I am with my present lot —

*Narb.* You must tear yourself away from

every thing, when the state requires your services elsewhere.

*Sel.* But, may I not at least request to have Mr. Firmin as my secretary?

*Firmin.* What an idea! Me? Me? as your secretary?

*Sel.* Yes, Mr. Firmin, I want you very much.

*Charles.* That I well believe.

*Narb.* We shall see to that. Well! And what of the music?

*Sel.* Miss Charlot has sung quite divinely.

## Scene V.

*The preceding. Enter Michael.*

*Michael.* The company have assembled in the saloon —

*Narb.* You'll have the kindness, dear mother, to receive them. I'll send off the memorial immediately. — (*Low to Selicour.*) Try and gain the consent of my daughter, and with pleasure, I'll consent to your being my son-in-law. — Once more! The work is excellent, and I would give much to have written it myself. (*Exit.*)

*Sel.* (*To Charles.*) Now, enjoy your triumph, Mr. Firmin! (*To Charlot.*) Our young friend knows how to accept compliments with a good grace.

*Charlot.* To judge from the nice pieces of his, which I have seen, I shouldn't have thought

that it would have been necessary for him to plume himself with borrowed feathers.

*Sel.* Simply, complaisance, Madam — But the company is waiting.

*Firm.* (*To his son*). Well, you have indeed gained very great applause. (*Selicour offers his arm to Charlot.*)

*Charles.* Yes, I have reason to boast of myself.

*Mrs. Bel.* (*To Selicour.*) Quite right! Lead Charlot. — Every thing becomes him. He is a charming man! (*Takes Firmin's arm.*)

*Sel.* (*Pointing to Firmin*). This gentleman, not I, deserves, the praise — I really don't know how I can ascribe it to myself. — All I am, all I am worth, is his merit alone. (*Exeunt omnes, except Charles.*)

## Scene VI.

*Charles* (*Remains alone.*)

My uneasiness would betray me. — I must first collect myself, before I can follow them. — Have I really had patience to bear all this? — A fine triumph I have gained! — For mockery's sake, they paid me the compliment. — It is evident, that they consider him, and not me, to be the author. I am their fool, and the knave alone has the honor.

## Scene VII.

*Charles. Enter La Roche.*

*La Roche.* Here you are, Mr. Firmin! — So quite alone — All is going on as you could wish, I suppose?

*Charles.* Oh, quite excellently!

*La R.* I have good hopes too.

*Charles.* Selicour is higher in favor than ever.

*La R.* What? Is it possible?

*Charles.* There is no cleverer head, no man more honorable.

*La R.* Is it possible! But this important memorial, with which the minister has charged him, and for the execution of which he is in no respect qualified?

*Charles.* The memorial is completed.

*La R.* Ah, you are only joking!

*Charles.* I tell you, it is completed.

*La R.* You are joking with me. 'Tis not possible.

*Charles.* A masterpiece in style and contents.

*La R.* I tell you, it's not possible.

*Charles.* I tell you, it is! — the memorial has been read, admired, and is just now about to be sent off.

*La R.* If so, he must have taken the devil into his pay.

*Charles.* And this embassy!

*La R.* Well, the embassy —

*Charles.* He receives it! He receives the hand of the young lady!

*La R.* She can't bear him.

*Charles.* She will submit.

*La R.* The embassy, together with the girl! No, by lucifer! That shall not, must not be! How? What? This hypocrite, this base fellow, snatch away a prize, which is the due reward of merit alone? — No, as sure as I'm alive! — That we must not consent to, we who know him. That is against our consciences; we should be his accomplices, if we suffered it.

*Charles.* I'll look for the grandmother immediately. — I'll open her eyes respecting the poem.

*La R.* Respecting the poem — What, the poem has also been taken into consideration — By it, he may, perhaps, get himself into favor with the old Mamma; but do you imagine, that the minister will suffer himself to be brought to a decision by such a trifle? — No, Sir! It is this memorial, which is said to be excellent, and to obtain which he must have used witchcraft, for he has by no means written it himself; I would swear to it — but all his witchcraft consists in his tricks! And we must beat him with his own weapons. The plain, open way wouldn't do — therefore, we must try a crooked one. Stop, an idea strikes me — yes, that will do. — But go — go — that they may not find us together.

*Charles.* But no imprudence, Mr. La Roche! Consider, what lies at stake!

*La R.* My honor is at stake, young gentleman, and that lies quite as near my heart as love does to yours. — Go! Go in! You shall hear more from me.

## Scene VIII.

*La Roche (alone).*

Let me see! — He has always endeavoured to find out the weak side of his superiors, in order to render himself indispensable to them. This very morning he had a chat with the valet-de-chambre. — This fellow is a tattler. There is a rumour about an affair of gallantry of the minister. — He is said to have engaged apartments in one of the suburbs. — I don't believe a word of it; but one might try — But, silence! Here he comes.

## Scene IX.

*La Roche. Enter Selicour.*

*Sel.* (*Without perceiving him.*) All is going on just as I could desire, and yet, I am not quite without apprehension. — Up to the present I have obtained neither the situation nor the bride, and both son and father have an eye upon my place, and at any moment may snatch it from me. — Ah, if I could but remove them. — But how?

The minister is not to be caught. — Those people who are straight forward in their actions, are in want of nobody — they are not to be got into one's power. — Yes, if he had but something to conceal, if I could but discover some weakness in him, which would render me indispensable!

*La R.* (*To himself.*) Quite right! He runs into my snare.

*Sel.* Ah, there you are, Mr. La Roche.

*La R.* Yes, here I am, and I come, Mr. Selicour —

*Sel.* What do you want?

*La R.* To confess that I was wrong.

*Sel.* Aha!

*La R.* And that my attack has not been of the least service to me.

*Sel.* That's the best of the matter. For it was indeed not the fault of your malicious tongue, that I have not been ruined.

*La R.* That's unfortunately true, and therefore, I can scarcely hope that you will forgive me.

*Sel.* Aha! Is it come to that? Are you beginning to be more pliant?

*La R.* I can scarcely entertain any hope more of obtaining the nice situation you intended for me. — But for old friendship's sake, don't injure me, at least.

*Sel.* I injure you!

*La R.* Pray, don't do so. Have pity on a poor devil.

*Sel.* But —

*La R.* And as some one has been found, who will intercede for me with the minister —

*Sel.* So? Has some one ....? And who is he?

*La R.* A lady, to whom Michael the valet-de-chambre has directed me.

*Sel.* Michael, the valet-de-chambre! So! Do you know this Michael?

*La R.* Not much! But, as it is his nephew who drives me out of my place, he will willingly do me a favor —

*Sel.* This lady is, no doubt, a relation of the minister's?

*La R.* She is said to be a beautiful woman — it is said that he is seeking lodgings for her in the suburbs.

*Sel.* Well, well, I don't want to know all that. — And what's the lady's name?

*La R.* That I don't know.

*Sel.* Well! Well!

*La R.* Michael will be able to give you information about it.

*Sel.* Me? Do you think, that I care so much about it?

*La R.* I don't say that.

*Sel.* I don't care about it — I don't in the least care about such things. — You will speak with this lady to-morrow?

*La R.* To-morrow.

*Sel.* There seems to be a great secret in the affair —

*La R.* (*Quickly.*) Of course! Of course! Therefore I beg you, not to mention a word about it.

*Sel.* Well! Well! No more about it — I shall not injure you, Mr. La Roche! — It is once for all my fate to oblige ungrateful persons — Notwithstanding the bad services you intended to render me, I love you still — and, in order that you may see, how far my complaisance goes, I will make common cause with your protectress. — Yes, that I will — you may rely upon it.

*La R.* Ah you are by far too generous!

*Sel.* But let it be a warning to you for the future —

*La R.* Oh, certainly, you shall see —

*Sel.* Enough. No more about it.

*La R.* He has taken the bait. He is as good as caught. How much quicker we succeed by knavery than by honesty. (*Exit.*)

*Sel.* Now immediately to this valet-de-chambre, Michael! — Here is a love affair. Quite certain — Excellent! I'll hold you fast, Narbonne! — You also are but a man — you have your frailties, and I am your master. (*Exit.*)

# ACT V.

## Scene I.

*Enter La Roche.*

They are still at table — The minister will appear immediately — How I have run myself out of breath — But heaven be praised, I am on the trace, I know all — Have I caught you at last, friend Selicour? — You could do nothing with the minister, as long as he was virtuous — but God bless his vices! Now there are secrets to be kept! There are services to be performed! And the confidant, the pander has won the game — He believes he has discovered a weakness in the minister — what a splendid field for his baseness! On! On! I am better informed, friend Selicour! — And you have no presentiment that we are laying a bad, bad snare for you — The minister is coming — Courage! Now is the time to strike the decisive blow. —

## Scene II.

*La Roche. Enter Narbonne.*

*Narb.* What do I see? Is it you again, who have had me called out?

*La R.* May this be the last interview which you grant me, Mr. de Narbonne, if I, even this

time, fail to convince you — But your own honor and mine render it necessary for me to insist upon it. — All that I have as yet tried to ruin this Selicour in your good opinion has turned out to his honor and to my disgrace — nevertheless, I have not yet given up the hope of unmasking him at last.

*Narb.* That's going too far! My patience is at an end.

*La R.* One word, your Excellency. — You are just now looking for lodgings in the suburbs? Are you not?

*Narb.* How? What do you mean by that?

*La R.* They are intended for a lady, who, with her whole family, is in the greatest misery. Am I not right?

*Narb.* How? What? You have had the impudence to watch my footsteps?

*La R.* Don't be angry. — I have only imitated your friend Selicour. It was he who, this morning, was the first to succeed in gaining this intelligence from your valet-de-chambre. — He immediately gave the affair the basest interpretation. — I, on the contrary, have reason to think quite otherwise of it. For, to confess the truth, I have made more accurate inquiries about it — I was there — I saw the lady in question — (*Laughs*) She is of a respectable age — Selicour takes her for a young beauty. — Don't get into a passion — I beg you, let him run into

the snare! Hear him to the end, and if you do not discover him to be a complete wretch, call me a villain for the remainder of my days. — Here he comes! — I will make way for him, that you may penetrate the matter at once. (*Exit.*)

*Narb.* The mad-man! To what a degree his passions blind him! What? Selicour is capable — No, no, no, no, it is not possible! Not possible!

## Scene III.

*Narbonne. Enter Selicour.*

*Sel.* (*Aside.*) He is alone! Now I can manage it. — If I don't hurry to render myself indispensable to him now, this Firmin will ingratiate himself with him. — When I have once his secret, he is quite in my power.

*Narb.* I have just been thinking, dear Selicour, what they will say in the ministry about your memorial. — I sent it immediately; they are reading it this moment, and I have no doubt, it will meet with the most perfect approbation.

*Sel.* If it has but yours, all my wishes are fulfilled. (*To himself.*) How shall I introduce it? — I risk nothing by it, for the affair is certain. I'll go straightforward to work —

*Narb.* You appear lost in thought, dear Selicour!

*Sel.* Yes — I — I have just been thinking what a malicious interpretation calumny is capable of giving the most innocent actions.

*Narb.* What do you mean by that?

*Sel.* I must speak out — I dare not conceal it any longer. — Evil tongues have presumed to attack your reputation — It has been rumoured — I beg you — answer me a question or two, and pardon anxious friendship, if I appear indiscreet.

*Narb.* Ask! I'll answer all.

*Sel.* If I may believe your valet-de-chambre, you are looking for lodgings in the suburbs?

*Narb.* Since you know it already, — yes.

*Sel.* And quite secretly, I hear.

*Narb.* Till now, at least, I have made a secret of it.

*Sel.* For an unmarried lady?

*Narb.* Yes.

*Sel.* Who is very — (*Hesitating*) very dear to you?

*Narb.* I confess, I take great interest in her.

*Sel.* (*To himself.*) He makes not the least secret of it. — The matter is certain — (*Loud.*) And you would like to avoid notoriety, would'nt you?

*Narb.* If it were possible, yes.

*Sel.* Ah, well, well, I understand. The affair is of a tender nature, and the world is so censorious. — But I can serve you.

*Narb.* You?

*Sel.* Can serve you! Depend upon me.

*Narb.* How then?

*Sel.* I'll procure you what you want.

*Narb.* How then? What then?

*Sel.* Now I have it. I'll procure it for you. — A quiet, secluded little house — simple and unsuspicious in exterior — but in the interior most nicely arranged — the furniture, the hangings, in the newest fashion — a cabinet — quite delightful — in short — the most beautiful boudoir to be met with far and wide.

*Narb.* (*To himself.*) Can La Roche be right? (*Aloud.*) And what secret reason could I have to seek such lodgings?

*Sel.* (*Smiling.*) In matters which one wishes to keep secret from me, I know how to repress intrusive curiosity. — As for the rest, you may look upon me as a zealous friend. — There is nothing that I would not be ready to do to render you a service. Command, whatever you please, I shall obey, without the least inquiry. — You understand me.

*Narb.* Perfectly.

*Sel.* One must be indulgent — I — I, 'tis true, set some value on good morals — but on this point — if only public scandal is avoided — but perhaps, I go too far in the matter — but my good heart leads me to it — and my most ardent wish is to see you happy.

## Scene IV.

*The preceding. Enter Michael.*

*Michael.* These letters have just been brought.

*Narb.* (*To Selicour.*) These are for you.

*Sel.* I beg your pardon. They are business letters, which must be dispatched immediately. — Quick to work, and quick to pleasure. That's my motto. (*Exit.*)

## Scene V.

*Narbonne* (*alone*).

I can scarcely recover from my astonishment! — This Selicour — yes, now I doubt no longer, this Selicour was the infamous abettor of my predecessor. — I don't pretend to be better than others; every one has his faults — but to offer himself with such shamelessness! — And I was about to sacrifice my child to this rascal — — I was about to deceive the state with this faithless fellow? — For friendship's sake, he says, he will do all for me! Are those friends, who serve our vices?

## Scene VI.

*Narbonne. Enter La Roche.*

*La R.* Well, he has just left you — may I ask? —

*Narb.* I have falsely judged both you and him. — You have rendered me an essential service, Mr. La Roche, and, at length, I do you justice.

*La R.* (*Moved with joy.*) Am I at last acknowledged as an honest man? May I hold up my head freely again?

*Narb.* You have succeeded — You have unmasked the impostor. — But how shall I give up a conviction, so long proved, that genius and talent never dwell in a corrupt heart? — This man, whom I have now discovered to be a base villain, has this very day delivered me a document, which would do honor to the greatest statesman, to the greatest writer. — Is it possible? I can't conceive it. — Such sound judgment, so much genius in so abject a character! I immediately sent the memorial to the government, and I'd wager that the letters that I have just received, are full of its praise. (*Opens one of the letters and reads; and then after a pause.*) Quite right! It is, as I said!

*La R.* I can't conceive it. — The document is therefore well written?

*Narb.* Excellently!

*La R.* If so, I would wager, that he is not the author of it.

*Narb.* But who can it be then?

*La R.* It is not he, I'll set my salvation on it — for, in all cases, I'd rather give him credit for heart than head — If a trial were only made — Yes! — Right — I have it — that must succeed — Mr. de Narbonne! If you will assist me, he shall betray himself.

*Narb.* How so?

*La R.* Leave it to me. — He's coming! Assist me!

## Scene VII.

*The preceding. Enter Selicour.*

*La R.* (*Passionately.*) Oh heavens! what a terrible misfortune!

*Sel.* What's the matter, Mr. La Roche?

*La R.* What a change in a single moment!

*Sel.* What's the matter with you? What does this lamentation, this outcry of terror signify?

*La R.* I am quite thunderstruck!

*Sel.* But what then?

*La R.* This fatal letter — The minister has just received it — (*To Narbonne.*) May I, shall I?

*Narb.* Say all.

*La R.* The minister is fallen?

*Sel.* Oh heavens!

*La R.* Dismissed from his post!

*Sel.* Is it possible?

*La R.* But too true! It has just been rumoured, I wouldn't believe it; I hastened here for information, and now the minister himself confirms it.

*Sel.* So, then this dreadful news is true?

(*Narbonne confirms it by a mute sign.*)

## Last Scene.

*The preceding. Enter Mrs. Belmont, Charlot and both Firmins.*

*La R.* Come, Madam! Come, Mr. Firmin!

*Mrs. Bel.* What's the matter?

*La R.* Console our master — inspire him with courage in his misfortune!

*Mrs. Bel.* In his misfortune!

*Charlot.* Oh goodness! What's the matter?

*La R.* He has lost his place.

*Charlot.* Oh heavens!

*Sel.* I am as much astonished as you are.

*Mrs. Bel.* Who could have foreseen such a misfortune?

*Charles Firmin.* (*Passionately.*) 'Tis thus talent is proscribed, thus, probity is a crime in this corrupt country! An honorable man scarcely supports his position for a day, and fortune is faithful only to the worthless.

*Narb.* (*Very seriously*). Not too quick, young man! — Heaven is just, and sooner or later punishment will overtake the guilty.

*Sel.* But, tell me at least! Is the cause of this unfortunate event not known?

*La R.* Unfortunately, it is but too well known. A certain memorial has been the cause of the whole misfortune.

*Firmin.* (*Vivaciously.*) A memorial! (*To the minister.*) The same perhaps which I saw you read to-day?

*Sel.* In which the government itself was treated with a liberty, a boldness —

*La R.* Quite right! The same.

*Sel.* There we have it! Well, was I wrong in saying, that is not always prudent to speak the truth?

*Narb.* When duty speaks, I never reflect. And whatever the consequence may be, I shall never repent of having done my duty.

*Sel.* Fine sentiments! Indeed! But they cost you a nice place!

*La R.* And that's the end of it! — Others also may lose their places — It is well known, that a minister is but seldom the author of the documents which issue from his office.

*Sel.* How so? How is that?

*La R.* (*Apart.*) Nothing is lost on the fellow, every blow hits him.

*Firm.* Explain yourself more clearly.

*La R.* The government is fully determined to find out the author of this violent memorial. —

*Sel.* So? And then, no doubt, he would be involved in the fate of the minister?

*La R.* Of course. That's very much to be feared.

*Sel.* Well, I am not the author.

*Firm.* I am the author.

*Narb.* What do I hear?

*Mrs. Bel.* What? You, Mr. Firmin?

*Firm.* I am he, and I boast of it.

*La R.* (*To Narbonne.*) Well, what did I tell you?

*Firm.* I willingly resigned the praise of the document to Mr. Selicour, but not so, the danger and responsibility — I have been silent up to the present, but now I must name myself.

*Charles.* Quite right, father! That's speak-

ing like a man of honor. — You have reason to be proud of your misfortune, Mr. de Narbonne. — My father cannot have written any thing deserving punishment. — Oh, my heart tells me this misfortune may become a source of happiness. — Charlot's hand will not now be sacrificed to circumstances. — Grandeur vanishes, and timid love takes courage.

*Mrs. Bel.* What do I hear! Mr. Firmin!

*Firm.* Pardon the warmth of his sympathy; his full heart overflows in giving expression to his feelings.

*Narb.* Thus, you have both betrayed your secrets. — Mr. Firmin! As you are the author of this memorial, it is but just, that you should also reap the praise, and the reward of it. — The government appoints you ambassador. — (*While all express surprise.*) Yes, I am still minister, and I am happy to be so, because I have it in my power to reward real merit.

*Mrs. Bel.* What is that?

*Sel.* (*Terribly confounded.*) What have I done?

*Narb.* (*To Selicour.*) You see your game exposed — We know you now, hypocrite in talent and virtue! You mean fellow, you! How could you presume to consider me your equal?

*La R.* How vilely he interpreted a noble action! I know all from the lady's own lips. This lady, for whom he imputed to you a culpable passion — is a sick, aged matron, the widow of

a meretorious officer, who lost his life in the service of his country, and to whom you have paid the debt of the State.

*Narb.* Say no more about it, I beg you. — (*To Selicour.*) You see that you are superfluous here. (*Selicour retires in silence.*)

*La R.* I pity the poor devil. — I knew well beforehand, that my hatred would subside as soon as his glory should be at an end.

*Firm.* (*Presses his hand softly.*) Say no more about it! We will endeavour to console him.

*La R.* Enough; I am at your service!

*Narb.* (*To Charles.*) Our lively young friend has become quite mute all at one. — I have read in your heart's core, dear Firmin. — I owe your secret to your surprise, and I will never forget, that your inclinations remained modestly silent during our prosperity, and only spoke loudly in our misfortune. — Charlot! (*She throws herself silently into her father's arms.*) Well, we understand each other! You may hope for every thing from your father's love.

*La R.* And I would swear, that Charles Firmin is the real author of the poem.

*Mrs. Bel.* Can it be possible?

*Charlot.* (*With a tender look at Charles.*) I have never had any doubt of it. (*Charles kisses her hand fervently.*)

*Mrs. Bel.* Oh the modest young man! He will certainly make our child happy!

*Narb.* Imitate your father, and, I will with pleasure, accept you as my son-in-law —

(*Partly to the players, and partly to the spectators.*)

This time merit has gained the victory. — It is not always so. The web of falsehood entangles the best; and the honorable cannot succeed; sneaking mediocrity prospers better than winged genius; appearances govern the world, and justice is only to be found on the stage. (*Exeunt omnes.*)

**Augsburgh: J. N. Hartmann, printer.**

Bögl

BSB Bayerische StaatsBibliothek
MDZ Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek

Schiller, Friedrich,

The Parasite, or the art to make one's fortune a comedy in five acts

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